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ABSTRACT

Published to celebrate the United Nations' International Year of the Family, this special issue presents selected articles from "set," a twice yearly journal of research information for teachers. These articles look at the contribution of educational research on the relationships between schools and families, and families and learning in Australia and New Zealand. There are two new items: "Pause, Prompt, Praise: Seventeen Years On," written by Ted Glynn especially for this "Best of 'set,'" and an item by Stuart McNaughton about new research on reading to pre-schoolers at home. The articles are arranged into four topics: families' resources and configurations, cooperation between schools and parents; children's well being, and reading in the home. Following an introduction by Valerie N. Podmore, the 14 articles are: (1) "Children's Use of the Resources Families Provide" (Gay Ochiltree and Paul Amato); (2) "Poverty and Performance" (Christine Wilson and Ann Dupuis); (3) "What Joyce Learnt from Her Mother," on the differences between talk at school and at home (Barbara Tizard); (4) "Step-Families" (Ruth Webber); (5) "Transition to School" (Margery Renwick); (6) "The Too Hard Basket," on closing the gap between parent and teacher expectations (Cathy Wylie); (7) "Parents Teaching in Schools" (Jacqueline McGilp); (8) "Keeping Ourselves Safe" (Freda Briggs); (9) "Educational Strategies for Chronically Ill Students" (Katherine Rowe and others); (10) "Is More of the Same Better?" on grade repetition (Diana Kenny); (11) "Family Violence: Its Effects on Children and Schools" (John Church); (12) "Pause Prompt and Praise," on a program for parents to assist with remedial reading at home (Ted Glynn); (13) "Reading to Pre-schoolers: Models of Tutoring" (Stuart McNaughton); and (14) "TV and Homework" (Mallory Wober). (WP)

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Best of *set:*
FAMILIES & SCHOOL

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Published to Celebrate the International Year of the Family

Item 1

Best of *set*: FAMILIES & SCHOOL

Introduction

Valerie N. Podmore
Senior Research Officer, NZCER

Co-operation between educational institutions and families is certainly topical in Australia and New Zealand in 1994. The United Nation's International Year of the Family (IYF) is an appropriate time to look at what educational research has contributed to our understanding of the relationships between schools and families, and families and learning.

This *Best of* **set**: *Families & School* is made up of items from past issues of **set**: *Research Information for Teachers* which are enlightening to people working where education and families connect. There are two new items: *Pause, Prompt, Praise: seventeen years on*, written by Ted Glynn especially for this *Best of* **set**, and an item by Stuart McNaughton about new research on reading to pre-schoolers at home.

We have arranged the collection into four topics.

Families

The first group of items focuses on two matters: families' resources and configurations.

Children's Use of the Resources Families Provide, by Gay Ochiltree and Paul Amato describes links between children's competence, family relationships and stress, and financial and other resources in the family. There are implications for the economic structuring of society, for education, and for teachers.

In *Poverty and Performance*, Christine Wilson and Ann Dupuis compare the family background of students from three achievement groups at the same high school, and make research based suggestions for teachers. These two items confront some of the educational problems that arise from the inequitable distribution of resources among families.

An item from Britain by Barbara Tizard, *What Joyce Learnt From Her Mother*, looks briefly at the different types of talk and teaching used in a working class home and a nursery school.

Ruth Webber's timely item addresses the topic of teaching children who come from reconstituted families. Increasingly, children experience a variety of family configurations, and *Step-families* gives a clear outline of the complexities. Ruth Webber's research suggests that teachers and schools have an important role working with children and parents in step-family situations.

Parents and Schools Co-operate

The second group of items is concerned with co-operation between schools and parents.

Transition to School: The Children's Experience by Margery Renwick, shows what children enjoy most and least when they are settling into school. Comments are included on the experiences of children from indigenous families in New Zealand and Australia.

In *The Too Hard Basket?*, Cathy Wylie describes gaps between parents' and teachers' expectations of children. She draws on her research, which followed 32 children during their first three years at school, to suggest ways that teachers can reach parents and work on closing these gaps.

Jacqueline McGilp's research, *Parents Teaching in Schools*, presents parents as active participants in the teaching process at school.

Children's Wellbeing

Items in the third group have an explicit or underlying theme of children's wellbeing. Most items in this section were researched and written in Australia. The diverse problems addressed include sexual abuse of children, chronic illness, retention in school classes, and family violence. There is a positive emphasis on co-operation between homes and schools to promote children's wellbeing.

In *Keeping Ourselves Safe*, Freda Briggs examines Australian and North American programmes, and a New Zealand programme, for 'personal safety'. This research shows how teachers, in co-operation with parents, can work with children from the age of five years upwards to make them less vulnerable to sexual molestation.

In *Educational Strategies for Chronically Ill Students*, paediatrician Dr Katherine Rowe and educational associates summarise data on the recovery and school attendance of children with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. They report on ways to assist families with children at home with a long-term illness and to help such children return to school.

Dianna Kenny investigates a different problem. In *Is More of the Same Better?* she presents research which challenges the view that repeating a class at school benefits a child's performance and socio-emotional wellbeing.

In this section we are also including a New Zealand item by John Church, *Family Violence: Its Effects on Children and Schools*. This issue remains topical. The study shows a link between parental discord and disturbed or violent behaviour in later life. Implications for teachers are outlined.

Learning at Home

The final group of items has much information about reading in the home. This part of the collection is indirectly a timely tribute to the work of Dame Marie Clay, recipient of the 1994 inaugural award of 'New Zealander of the Year'.

The Pause, Prompt, Praise way of teaching reading originated in Auckland from theoretical work by Marie Clay in the 70s (*Reading: The Patterning of Complex Behaviour*, Auckland: Heinemann, 1979) and further work by Stuart McNaughton in the 80s (*Being Skilled: The Socializations of Learning to Read*, London: Methuen, 1987). A new item by

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Ted Glynn, *Pause Prompt Praise: Seventeen Years On* explains the well established method of helping families to help their children progress in reading. Pause, Prompt, Praise continues to assist with remedial reading at home. Ted Glynn's team recently developed an updated version, and also a Maori language version used for peer tutoring.

The second substantial item in this section, *Reading to Pre-schoolers: Models of Tutoring* by Stuart McNaughton, describes three studies which observe family members who are involved in reading to young children. These two important new items illustrate how learning at home takes place within cultural and family contexts.

Finally, a rather different item by Mallory Wober, *TV and Homework*, outlines research from audience surveys in the UK. The information provided by a panel of children on their experiences and views of doing homework to the accompaniment of television is relevant to parents and teachers.

* * *

Naturally, some important work on families is not included in this *Best of set* collection. All of the items here are research-based, all but two were researched and written in Australia or New Zealand, and they are concerned with families and schools. We trust that the material included will continue to be of use to teachers and families during the International Year of the Family and in the future.

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*Best of **set**: Families & School*

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3. Poverty and Performance
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   Children from homes with little money do not **always** fail, but it is usual. Three groups in one high school are compared. From ***set*** No 1, 1992

4. What Joyce Learnt From Her Mother
   Barbara Tizard
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Parents and Schools Co-operate

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Item 2

FAMILIES
& SCHOOL

Children's Use of the Resources Families Provide

By **Gay Ochiltree** and **Paul Amato**

Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne

IT IS IN THE FAMILY that children learn the skills and knowledge necessary to get along. Most children in fact become pretty competent in both their own family group and in larger social groups such as school. However, some families manage to help their children to be competent better than others. Perhaps there are ways to assist.

Of course there are some things that are unalterable, such as the general level of health of family members, the family's cultural background, and quite often family income depends on the country's economy. In a large study of all the things that affect how well children manage we came across important family factors that can be changed.

Researchers have frequently been more concerned with what adults say is good for children; we made the child's viewpoint our major focus. In articles available from the Institute of Family Studies there are examinations of the effect of family type and family conflict on children's competence. How do family resources help or hinder?

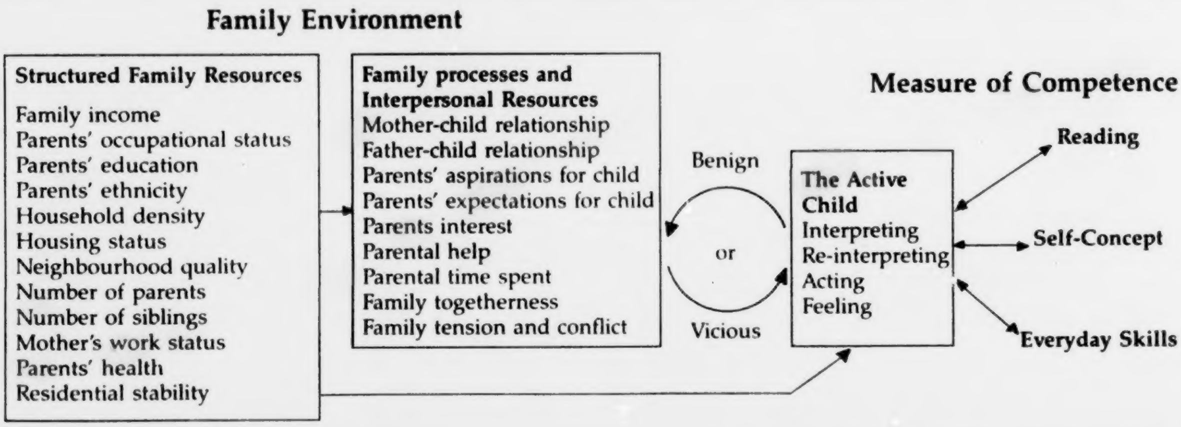
Active Agents

Children are active agents in family processes: they are not passive and merely moulded by the family. From infancy they find they can have an effect on the environment, including family members. Feelings of satisfaction lead to an intrinsic motivation for competence, and so in satisfactory circumstances, the child becomes more and more competent. Brewster Smith, who has written about the development of competence, calls this a benign circle of socialisation. However, where the environment is not responsive to the child's efforts, a sense of competence may not develop and we have a vicious circle of socialisation.

To give an overall picture of why children differ considerably, both in the competence they are equipped with and in their self-image of their own competence, we can draw on the concept of resources for competence. (See Figure 1.) On the left hand side are two lists of resources which are part of the family environment. On the far left are the more objective 'given' and relatively unalterable resources; the items at the top are linked to society, the bottom ones are just part of each family. All of the resources in this list are largely beyond the direct control of the child; they are the Structural Family Resources to which the child must adapt. They have a direct effect, but much of their impact is mediated by family processes – the arrows on the figure show this – into indirect effects.

In the second list are the more dynamic and intangible family resources. These include such things as the relationships between children and parents and the presence or absence of conflict in the family. These resources are changeable and can be influenced by the child. It is thought that these **Family Processes and Interpersonal Resources** directly affect the child's competence. This reciprocal relationship between the child and the family environment is indicated on the model by a circle. However, the true relationship is more like a spiral of increasing or decreasing competence.

Figure 1. Resources for competence


Family Environment
Structured Family Resources
Family income
Parents' occupational status
Parents' education
Parents' ethnicity
Household density
Housing status
Neighbourhood quality
Number of parents
Number of siblings
Mother's work status
Parents' health
Residential stability
Family processes and Interpersonal Resources
Mother-child relationship
Father-child relationship
Parents' aspirations for child
Parents' expectations for child
Parents interest
Parental help
Parental time spent
Family togetherness
Family tension and conflict
Benign
or
Vicious
The Active Child
Interpreting
Re-interpreting
Acting
Feeling
Measure of Competence
Reading
Self-Concept
Everyday Skills

In our study we used three measures which tap rather different aspects of competence: reading – as reading is a **highly valued skill on which formal education is based; self-esteem** – to tap the child's feelings about self; **everyday skills** – using a check-list of 20 skills needed for taking care of personal needs in everyday life. The arrows to and from these measures in the figures reflect the effect of intrinsic motivation; the children's level of competence depends on both how they interpret what others do and think, and how they see their own behaviour.

Some analysis of the data showed that both **Structured Family Resources** and **Family Processes and Interpersonal Resources** were related to children's reading ability: high levels in both pointed to high reading competence. Children's self-esteem appeared to be more strongly related only to **Family Processes and Interpersonal Resources.**

However, the child is an active user of resources, so it was decided to attempt to discover **how** family processes help a child translate resources into competence. We decided to concentrate on children from families which were either very high or very low in income, status, education, housing, and so on – the relatively untouchable social facts. Also we concentrated on children who were either very high or very low in general competence.

Where *structured* resources are low, one might expect to find children who are low in competence. Likewise, where structured resources are high, highly competent children might be expected to be the norm. Most interesting are those anomalous cases where family resources are low, yet children have achieved a high level of competence, or where children come from families with high resources, yet are below averagely competent.

Findings

1. High competence children generally came from families where relationships were close and warm, while low competence children were more likely to come from families where relationships were distant.
2. Low competence children frequently complained that they did not have enough time with parents or that parents were uninterested in what they did. At secondary level this concern was frequently expressed about fathers who were seen as 'workaholics'.
3. The parents of high competence children, in almost all cases, held high educational and occupational aspirations for their children, while the opposite was usually true of low competence children.

High Resources

An example of a typical family from the high resource but low competence group illustrates these trends. Amelia aged 16 lives with her parents and younger siblings. Her father earns a good income from his own business which often requires weekend and evening work. Amelia's mother described her as 'a bit moody, very quick tempered. She lacks confidence, she'll only go if you push her'. Her parents often argued over the children, money, sex, chores, and responsibilities.

Amelia described her mother as 'easy to get along with' but 'she works too hard'. The fights between her parents made her 'feel uptight and [I] try to stop them because they really scream and yell'. Amelia wished her father would spend more time with her, but said he is 'always busy with his work'. Her description of her father revealed some ambivalence: 'He gets mad easy – easy to get along with if you don't get on the wrong side of him'.

Low Resources

1. Low competence children generally came from families marked by multiple problems and sources of stress. The chaotic, and demanding nature of family life appeared to leave many of these parents 'drained' of time and energy. As a result, parent-child relationships tended to be distant and unrewarding.
2. High competence children, although coming from families which frequently faced problems, often economic, were nevertheless able to maintain a supportive, close relationship with at least one parent. Their parents helped them with problems and school work.
3. A strong trend was apparent: the parents of high competence children had high aspirations and expectations for their children.

A typical family which illustrates the low resource high competence group was that of Jane, aged 16. Jane's family is still adjusting to the separation of her parents a year ago. The mother and children get along well. Until the separation Jane liked her father best but now had more understanding and affection for her mother. She said, 'I can talk over anything with her, except I don't like to talk about Dad to

her . . . I talk about everything else with Mum'. Jane felt that both of her parents were interested in her, and she was satisfied with the amount of time her mother spends with her. Although Jane expressed a great deal of pain and sorrow at the separation of her parents, she appeared to be coping well.

Although Jane's family, and others like it, were relatively impoverished in material terms they were still able to provide home environments involving warmth, encouragement, and general support. Children in these families, although disadvantaged in certain ways, were able to draw upon these family resources when they were needed, and appeared to be well on the way to becoming competent adults. However, since they lacked economic resources it is likely that the advent of some major problem (health, accident, unemployment) could throw these families into disequilibrium.

What Can Be Done To Help?

Increased economic support is necessary for all low resource families. This would provide both the basic necessities and some necessary extras such as books and outings which help develop child potential. It would also remove the stress associated with economic uncertainty and in multiple problem families might allow the rechannelling of time and energy into the building up of social and emotional relationships.

However, economic and material support alone is not sufficient to facilitate the development of child competence in families where interpersonal relationships are unsatisfactory. This was clearest in the high resource families, such as Amelia's, where the children were low in competence. These families, despite their general level of affluence, were often marked by a pattern of distance and lack of warmth. For many families rich or poor, the provision of increased support and education for better family relationships could be useful. Where and how can such help be given? Preventative education, such as human relations education in schools, and later on, preparation for marriage, is one answer, especially in the long term. However, in the short term, some form of counselling or family therapy is necessary if families seek help.

The large number of high resource but low competence children who regretted the lack of interest and attention shown by their fathers (usually due to long working hours) highlights the importance of the role of the father! Highly competent children from one-parent homes rarely expressed this regret, and usually felt that their fathers were interested in them even though they did not live in the household. Thus, the crucial factor seems to be the interest and attention of the father, rather than his location.

Staggered or flexible working hours, the availability of permanent part-time work for mothers and fathers, (with eligibility to return to full-time work), in both the public and private sector, could assist in parental responsibilities being more equitably shared. At present there are some moves in this direction in Australia. The current provisions for equal opportunity may lead to a lessening of sex-role stereotyping. By encouraging men to work in early childhood education, which is still largely the province of women, the fathers of tomorrow can have a greater variety of models of male behaviour.

Finally, there are implications for education.

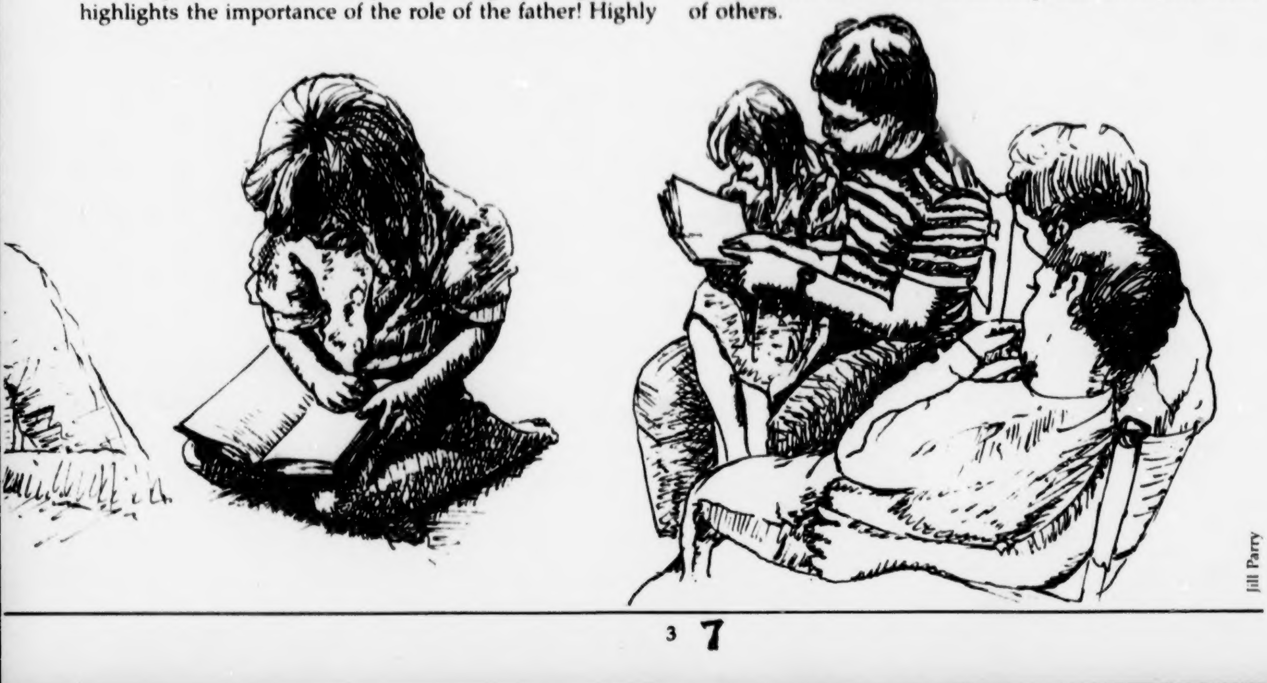
1. Children from low resource families can be helped directly through the provision of more pre-school and child care facilities. In Australia such facilities are not equally available to all children and continue to be inadequately funded.

2. Programs where teachers work together with parents, especially where the parents are from all socio-economic circumstances, are more likely to be effective in enhancing child competence than those which exclude parents; an example of this is the British Harringey Project in which parents learned to assist their children with reading and writing.

3. Teachers must avoid stereotyping children on the basis of family type. In our study we found many of the most competent children came from one-parent families.

What Competencies?

Which competencies do we want to develop in our children? At present the national emphasis is on achievement and competition. Should we, or could we, emphasise interpersonal skills, concern for others and social responsibility? If there is to be more money and effort put into developing competence in children, what does the community get back for its investment? Explicit in the notion of greater community support for children there should be a clear expectation of reciprocity. Children should not only be capable of caring for their own needs but also develop concern for the needs of others.



Jill Parry

Notes

Dr Gay Ochiltree is a Fellow of the Institute of Family Studies, 300 Queen St, Melbourne, Victoria 3000, Australia. Dr Paul Amato was a Research Fellow at the Institute at the time of the project described here.

Interviews were completed with 195 primary school children in Years 3 or 4 and aged 8 or 9, and 207 secondary school students aged 15 or 16 in Years 10 or 11 at secondary school. The children were randomly selected by family type from a representative sample of State, Independent and Catholic schools throughout the state of Victoria. Approximately half the children had experienced the separation and divorce of their parents, and a small number the death of a parent. Seventy-three children in this group lived in stepfamilies. A parent, usually the mother, was interviewed in each family, and the child was interviewed on tape and the interview transcribed. The child was also tested using the Everyday Skills Scale, a Cloze reading test and a Piers Harris measure of self concept.

Acknowledgement

This work is part of the study Children in Families conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies. The study was designed by Gay Ochiltree and Don Edgar (Director); Paul Amato joined the study after the field work was completed.

Further Reading

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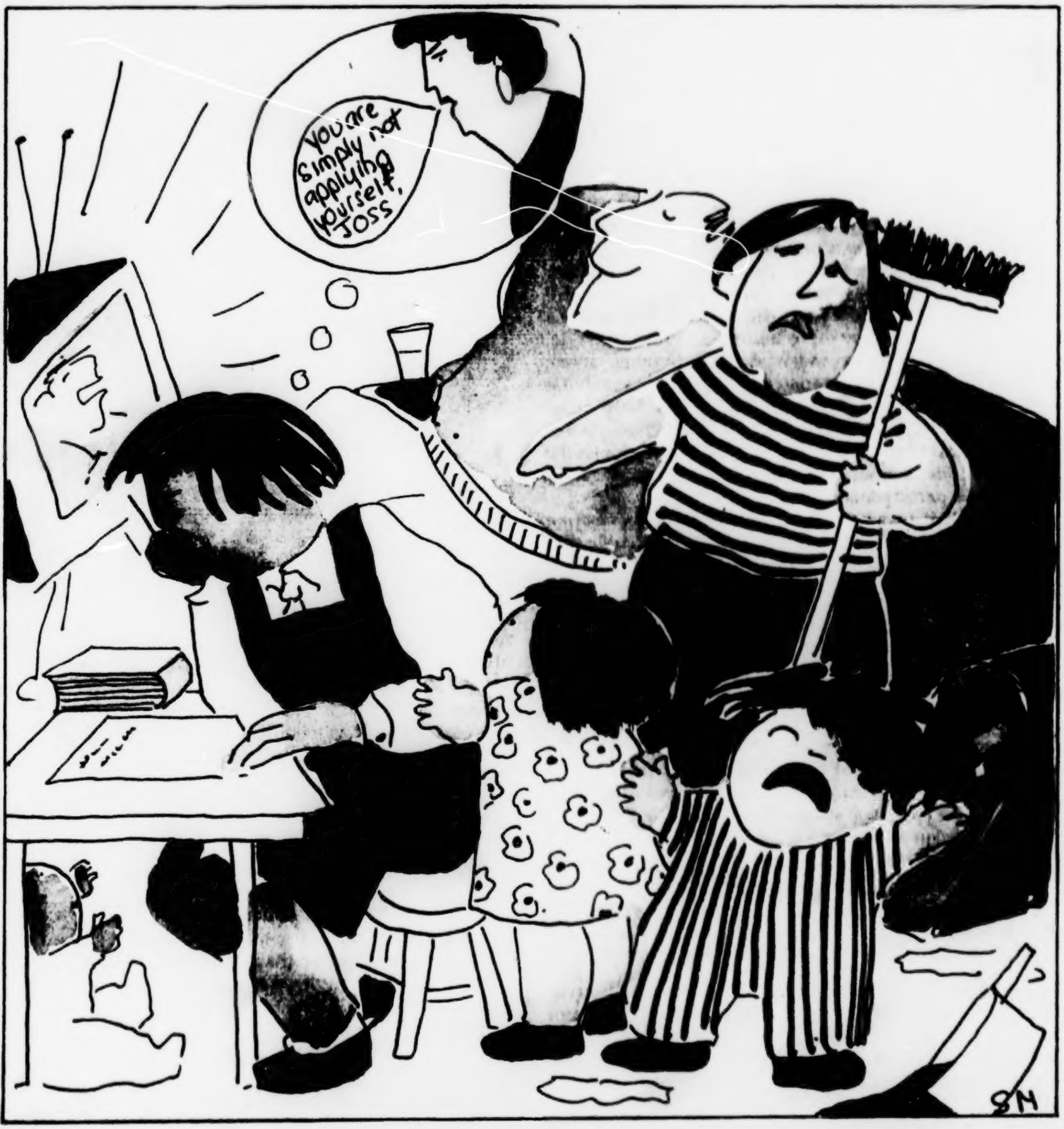
Item 3

Best of *set*:
FAMILIES
& SCHOOL

POVERTY AND PERFORMANCE

Christine Wilson
Christchurch

Ann Dupuis
Canterbury University


You are simply not applying yourself, Joss.
SN

Shona McLean

POVERTY AND PERFORMANCE

Introduction

BACK IN 1984 the effects of low wages were being felt in New Zealand. There was a sharemarket boom (against the trend), followed by a crash in 1987. Since then real wages have dropped and benefits such as Unemployment, the Family Benefit and Domestic Purposes Benefit have been cut. Costs which used to be subsidised, such as daily transport, doctors visits, prescriptions and school extras have increased. Being unemployed is even more likely for the present generation of school leavers than it was back in 1985 when the research for this paper was undertaken.

For these reasons please consider, as you read, whether any of our findings are out-of-date. Does poverty still affect school performance? It did in 1985. The reasons were not simple. They were bound up with life style, expectations, tradition, as well as dollars. In other reports we have discussed the theoretical explanations involving class and cultural capital which we believe help make sense of the link between poverty and poor school performance. In this article we will try to avoid these and let the facts speak for themselves, particularly through the comments of the participants in the research.

In the 70s it was suggested that *cultural deprivation* caused underachievement at school; in particular that children of poor families were brought up in such a way that they learned to expect and to live in poverty. It was called the cycle of deprivation and it was thought education could break it. Major preschool programmes in the USA had as one of their aims the eventual elimination of poverty. It hasn't worked. Afro-Americans and Hispanics have not had their poverty lifted.

More radical thinkers have put forward different reasons for the continuation of poverty. The rich run things their way (they have the money to do it) and that includes keeping the poor poor, keeping power in their own hands and structuring an education system that has resulted in failure for a significant number of economically deprived students.

Again, you may find our discoveries confirm or deny these theories.

Background to the research

The impetus for this research came from the observations of one of the authors who was the home-room teacher in a female, single-sex, urban high school. She perceived that her home-room students were not necessarily low-ability students although their achievement levels might lead one to think so. What did impress her was the number of home-room students who came from very poor families. From this point the authors set out to try to understand the link they saw between poverty and poor school achievement.

For the purposes of the study, three groups of students were identified. The first group, Group A, were the twelve home-room students. In the school where our research took place the home-room situation catered for students who were perceived as having special learning needs and who would best respond to their needs being met by being in a small class with the same teacher for the core subjects.

Two control groups, each also made up of twelve girls, were then established in order to explore the issues of differential achievement and family income levels. There were two criteria for student selection to the two control groups. The first was high achievement. The second was parental occupation as an indicator of family income. These groups we called:

Group B – high achievers, low income
Group C – high achievers, high income.

An interview programme was set up at school in which interviews were carried out with the girls. Later, at their homes, their mothers and a few fathers were also interviewed.

The three groups

Group A (Home-room)
Fathers' occupations included council labourer, labourer/driver and freezing worker. One quarter of the fathers were unemployed. Two fathers were of higher socio-economic status. However only five of the twelve girls actually lived with both birth parents.

Seven of the mothers were in paid employment, two full time. Two were cleaners, three worked in shops, one worked at home as a ticket writer and another did craft work. One mother was a trainee playcentre supervisor (unpaid). Three mothers were housewives. There was no information available on one mother so the interview was with the girl's father with whom she lived.

On average the fathers of these girls had spent two years at high school, while their mothers had been at high school slightly longer. Five parents had had no high school education at all. Five girls lived in single parent families. One girl was Maori.

Group B (High achievers, low income)
This group was twelve high-achieving girls from the top fifth form (Year 10) class.

Their fathers' occupations included taxi driver, rubber

worker, fitter and turner, watersider, and mechanic.

Nine mothers worked in paid employment outside the home. Four were office workers, one a nurse, one a teacher, one a shop manageress and two were distributors. Four of them worked full time. Three mothers were housewives.

The average time spent at high school by the fathers was 2.9 years. For the mothers it was 3.3 years. One girl was of Chinese descent. Three girls lived in single parent families.

Group C (High achievers, high income)
This group was twelve high-achieving girls whose fathers were well paid. Three were in education, three were civil servants, one a scientist, and five were in business.

The mothers of four of these girls were teachers, one a hostel matron, one a nurse, two office workers, and three housewives.

The fathers of these girls had spent an average of 3.5 years at high school. Three had university degrees. Their mothers had spent an average of just over three years at high school. One mother had a university degree.

Two girls lived in single parent families. One girl was Maori.

Group A

Family income

Many of the girls lived in homes where the weekly income fell well below that of the average ordinary weekly earnings of all New Zealanders which in August, 1985, amounted to $311.

Five homes were supported solely by Domestic Purposes, Unemployment or Sickness Benefits, bringing in, for a solo parent with one child, $182. For a married couple with one child it was $198. In five of the seven homes where one or both parents were in paid employment, their total weekly earnings were also well below the average for New Zealanders. Thus two-thirds of this group lived in relative poverty.

To a large extent the material circumstances of parents determine the life chances of children. It is quickly calculated from public data that those children who live in poverty are those least likely to succeed within the school system. Low family income and high drop-out rates go together.

As an illustration of poverty here is what we found when we visited Tracy's mother. Tracy is the eldest of five children whose ages range from a few months to fifteen years. Tracy's stepfather works as a council labourer. The current award wage for this type of work was approximately $240 take-home pay per week. In addition the family receives Family Benefit and Family Care. Tracy's mother supplements the family income by working part-time as a cleaner. This is made possible by Tracy assuming her mother's role in the household, taking care of the four younger children, preparing the evening meal and carrying out other domestic tasks. The family have just bought a house but with mortgage commitments, expenses associated with home ownership and other domestic outgoings there is no money left to carpet and furnish their home. Paths and fences have yet to be completed. Landscaping is out of the question. The family car is old and in need of repair. It does not have a warrant of fitness so is not driven beyond the immediate neighbourhood.

Poverty imposes limits. We believe there are strong links between financial hardship in the home and underachievement at school. All but three girls in this group lived in areas of relative disadvantage or need (identified by the Department of Health as areas with a lack of community and cultural facilities). In general the standard of housing was poor, lacking space and privacy. Most of the girls shared a bedroom and there was no quiet place for them to do homework.

Poverty also meant that the lives of the girls were home bound. Lack of money restricted involvement in any activities outside the home that required money. For example: uniforms, equipment or payment for lessons. Half of the girls' families had no car, therefore activities that required a car were out of the question.

Home life

At home, with few exceptions, the girls were relied on to perform a variety of domestic chores like cleaning, ironing, cooking, dishwashing and in many cases helping with younger siblings. Each week the average time spent on these tasks was twelve hours. This also included baby-sitting for parents and neighbours, and was the means by which they earned their pocket money. With baby-sitting included, the girls earned on an average $15 per week. Baby-sitting was seen as a means to an end. It was not a job relished by any of the girls.

Because their lives were centred in the house, there was a concentration on so-called feminine tasks. These tied the girls to their own or their neighbours' homes and afforded them little opportunity for moving out of their immediate environment.

Within many of the households we saw an inter-female dependence. The mothers needed the girls' support through their labour and child minding, and the girls needed access to money. Both satisfied each others' needs. Thus working class income was recycled within the family. Often too, the girls' domestic labour enabled their mothers to take a job outside the home, thus providing a practical solution in these homes where the men or boys did little around the house. The households tended to be authoritarian, male dominated and male oriented – roles for all family members were clearly defined and household management was clearly a female task.

In this group family size averaged 4.0 children, a factor which contributed to the financial pressures on the family, as well as the domestic workload.

From our observations the majority of the mothers worked very hard, and put in extremely long hours. Some had dual roles as housewife/mother and paid member of the work force in (traditional female) poorly paid jobs.

Within this group we were aware that females in at least half the homes had to contend with some measure of domestic violence or sexual abuse. In such circumstances strong, stable family relationships are difficult to forge and sustain.

For poorly paid, working class men life can be frustrating and demoralising in a society where a man's worth is judged according to the size of his pay packet. Because of little education and the sort of jobs they were in, scope for advancement was restricted, despite the myth that hard work brings reward. Their work was characterised by powerlessness; but at home the male can be a potent force in relation to the female members of his family. The demands that flow on from this are intense, and often the household revolves around the male and his expectations. Such patterns of behaviour are frequently inflexible, and based purely on tradition with a strict division of labour adhered to and roles determined by gender, and never negotiated.

We found that the girls accepted unquestioningly that the traditional female role is the 'natural' role for women and so they carried out the female domestic tasks allotted to them. On the other hand it was not expected that their brothers should perform similar domestic tasks or be tied to the house as their sisters were. The girls saw their brothers at the same age as having more freedom to pursue social activities and having fewer limits placed upon them.

> *My brother has more freedom than me. Mum thinks that because I'm a girl I'm not allowed out as late.*
>
> Jan

In fact, the boys were treated in much the same way as the adult men in the household with little domestic input demanded of them. The same degree of interdependence that existed between mother and daughter was not apparent between son and either parent.

In the male-dominated households, where financial pressure was evident, adult relationships were frequently strained. Few of the girls in this group had been exposed to stable, long-term relationships. They, in turn had difficulties in establishing and maintaining social relationships with their peer group or with adults. Eleven of the twelve in this group said they had a 'best friend'. However, most of these best friend relationships were transitory, often fraught with difficulty and dependent on recent activities or family approval. Only three of the girls had maintained a long-term friendship with another girl.

A few of these girls spoke warmly about their parents but they were in a minority. Many facets of the girls' lives caused disagreement and conflict between them and their parents. While they understood they were needed at home, they nevertheless sought opportunities for independence. Typically, they would go to one another's houses, look around the shops, or go to the park and smoke. Often their attempts at establishing independence involved engaging in activities unacceptable to parents. The classroom was often the arena for bragging about social activities and escapades that occurred out of school hours. In this way girls conformed to what they perceived peer group behaviour to be.

Most parents spoke of difficulties in dealing with their daughter's behaviour; they tried to impose rules and set limits on the girls' social lives. Some of the girls directed a tremendous amount of energy towards circumventing these limits; invariably conflict resulted.

> *Yes I do have lots of rules but it usually ends up with a yelling session. Because I can't get my point of view across to her she yells and slams and goes in her room. I've tried calmly talking to her ... When I say why she can't do something or if I let her do something, she goes the complete opposite and does what she's not supposed to be doing. She abuses that trust I've put into her.*
>
> Alison's mother

Most of the mothers were concerned that their daughters might get pregnant. For them this was a very real fear and was the basis on which they set the rules. It became evident that in their efforts to shield and protect their daughters they in fact intensified the conflict in their relationships.

Although the girls' lives were generally centred around the home, in close physical contact with members of their family, they had very little idea of many of the activities, circumstances and even employment of parents, brothers and sisters. Family talk was not about such (dull?) matters and so an important medium for learning about the world around them was curtailed.

Television viewing

Because the girls spent so much time at home it is not surprising that television was a major focus of their lives. All the girls watched television and all homes had television sets. On average, the girls watched 30 hours of television per week. Programme favourites included *Young Doctors, Falcon Crest, Dynasty, Dallas* and *Ready to Roll*. When asked which television personality they would most like to be, the majority chose a male star.

> *Magnum. He's good looking and real nice. He lives on a beach; lives in Hawaii and has a real nice house and car.*
>
> Teresa

Television watching was, for these girls, a passive activity, taking place with an almost total lack of critical awareness. The life experiences of these girls were completely different from and unrelated to those they saw on television. They said that soap operas were realistic yet, to a large extent, the characters in these programmes had lives of opulence, professional jobs and luxurious homes. Yet they could not recognise that their interpretation was contradictory. This led us to conclude that it was an emotional identification the girls felt.

Males play a dominant role in television programmes, particularly in the kinds of programmes to which these girls had heavy exposure like soap opera, 'sit coms', and dramas where men are portrayed as being more powerful, funny, active and more daring than women. The girls were not interested in watching a variety of programmes. Because of this, they did not see programmes which showed alternative perspectives or lifestyles.

We cannot discuss the effect of television without reference to the subtle pressure of advertising. Usually advertising shows women in stereotyped roles, as wives, mothers or girlfriends. It idealises life – all babies are no trouble at all, all homes are havens of peace. Young girls are told by the media that they can become beautiful if only they wear these jeans, that nailpolish or this kind of perfume. To get men to pay attention to you takes only a certain kind of shampoo, toothpaste or pantyhose. This kind of advertising exposure is intended to create desires and needs. But powerfully and subtly it puts women in roles inferior to and dependent on men.

Fashion and money

The desire to appear fashionable was very important to these girls. They shopped for clothes at a chain store that specialised in cheap, fashionable lines. Conformity of dress was one way the girls could achieve some degree of identity with others in their peer group.

All the girls went regularly to a hairdresser. They felt it was important to 'look good'.

> *I go so people won't criticise me.*
>
> Susan

The desire to be 'cool' led a number of them to smoke occasionally. A third smoked regularly, although only one was allowed to smoke at home.

All these girls made their own financial decisions. Most tried to save some money. All had bank accounts, the highest balance being $300. Despite the lack of parental guidance in matters relating to money, some girls managed their money quite competently.

Reading habits

All the girls in this group had reading difficulties. Although all their homes received an evening newspaper and nearly all bought the *Woman's Weekly* and *Truth*, little other reading matter came into the homes on a regular basis. All the girls said they read the newspaper but further questioning revealed that they only glanced at the headlines, the pictures, advertisements and the television page. However, most of these girls exhibited a curiosity about the problems faced by other people. Most girls were quite aware of the current court cases and the personalities involved. Nearly every girl read avidly the problem column in the *Woman's Weekly*.

I like to read about love and teenage girls and their problems.
Leanne

For them, this was the reality of their own lives, so it made sense to read about it.

Libraries were deemed irrelevant by the girls. Two of them belonged to the Public Library but did not use it. The remainder of the group did not belong to a library. When asked about who would use a library regularly they replied:

Brainy people like teachers.
Susan

Old people who have nowhere else to go.
Tina

Leisure activities

The social activities of these girls were limited. Generally their social activities revolved around occasional visits to the cinema and going to town with friends on Friday night. Such visits afforded them the opportunity to shop and possibly meet boys. Their home-based life style, coupled with attending a single-sex school, meant the girls could not meet boys in a structured social situation. Although only one girl had a steady boyfriend, two-thirds of the group thought fifteen was an acceptable age for going steady.

Yes, everybody goes steady at fifteen.
Kay

It gives you something to look forward to.
Marama

They all thought it was possible for girls of fifteen to fall in love. Half said they had been in love. These girls, without exception, were fascinated with boys. They provided a constant topic of conversation and there was a continual air of anticipation about finding a boyfriend.

Girls' attitudes to marriage

All but two of these girls said they wanted to get married. Their ideal age for marriage was twenty-five. Attributes most desired in a husband were good looks, nice personality and a 'bit of money'. They mostly saw themselves in the future as better off married than single. However, some had ambivalent attitudes towards marriage.

Marriage is better because there's someone there, but if you're single you don't get tied down.
Leanne

Half of them wanted to have children when they were older.

Yes one of each, but later on.
Kay

Those who said they did not want children saw them as nuisances.

No they're too noisy.
Leanne

No they're too much trouble and too much work.
Tracy

Both of these girls had spent a lot of time looking after younger siblings and had an appreciation of the responsibilities of constant child care. One girl said she intended carrying on working after she had had a baby. All the others who wanted children thought one could not be a good mother and work full time. Despite the fact that these girls had been exposed to alternative perspectives on family life through their female teachers, it was apparent that the role model endorsed at home was the one significant for them.

Attitudes to education

All the girls talked of learning experiences at primary and intermediate schools in a negative manner. All had experienced learning difficulties. In almost all cases these had been recognised by parents early in their daughter's schooling. Seven parents had approached the school concerning these difficulties. Six of them had not received any help.

I discussed Kelly with him but it was wasted. We didn't get the right response. But I thought, 'he's the teacher.'
Kelly's mother

Some parents did not approach the school because they felt inadequate; others because stresses within the home got in the way.

I was on a benefit in those days and there wasn't much extra money.
Tina's father

Some parents blamed themselves for their daughter's lack of progress.

I thought it was me at fault, I didn't go along.
Kay's mother

Many of the low-achieving girls felt hurt and humiliated by past teachers. They felt they had needs that had not been met, that they had not been treated fairly, and were angry about it. Time and again we heard them say, 'We didn't get help.'

They just went on and expected you to do it and you didn't know how to.
Kay

The girls felt they were getting left behind and sensed the injustice of the situation. This seemed to widen the gap between them and the teachers – whom they saw as unapproachable.

The teachers were unfair. You couldn't go to them.
Leanne

Some even had experiences of teachers being blatantly rude and offensive.

The teachers called us dummies and thicks.
Teresa

They felt that the teachers were not aware of the problems they were experiencing with school work.

She just wanted us to be like her and we weren't.
Marama

One girl had bad memories of being in an open plan classroom, with seventy-one other children and two teachers. She said she found it difficult to withstand the noise. This particular girl was quiet, shy and sensitive. As a result she withdrew, felt left out and left behind. At this stage she was already experiencing problems with reading and mathematics and amidst this type of classroom organisation felt overwhelmed and unable to cope.

These girls identified teachers, class sizes and the system in general as factors that played a vital role in their lack of success at primary school. They were aware they were not receiving the help they needed and had come to realise they were 'academically inadequate'. This translated to:

You start thinking you're dumb.
Kay

Positive comments about primary school were limited.

> *It was good in Standard 3 because parents came along and helped us with our reading.*
>
> Susan

> *The teacher was good too. She helped us.*
>
> Teresa

The girls saw their entry to high school as a positive move.

> *I liked it. I felt more important and grown up.*
>
> Tina

They were enthusiastic about the size of their present class and form room.

> *You get more help in a smaller class.*
>
> Susan

They responded well to teachers who accepted them as they were, and who had realistic expectations of them.

> *Some teachers kind of joke and even if you say the wrong answers you don't feel put down. It doesn't matter if it's wrong.*
>
> Teresa

They criticised methods used by other teachers whose expectations were unrealistic.

> *In one class we go to we get all these sheets of paper and have to copy them into your books.*
>
> Kay

Teachers find that a busy class is not troublesome and some find classes such as this one very difficult to handle. So keeping the students busy becomes a strategy to keep control and discipline. However, when the content of this 'busy' work does not fit the students' needs or abilities their response will be negative. Classroom management based on teacher insecurity and fears flies in the face of child-appropriate education.

The girls expressed enthusiasm about being given real choices. What they saw as meaningful and of interest was frequently in conflict with what teachers expected them to do.

> *In one subject we've been doing the same thing for about all the term. You do what you're told. It's boring. I'd like to do other stuff.*
>
> Teresa

Inappropriate tasks led to rebellious behaviour. Teachers call it 'skylarking' and 'fooling around' and often blamed the girls.

The girls felt angry if blame was misdirected at them for others' misbehaviour in the classroom.

> *It's not fair. Sometimes you're doing something right and someone else is doing something wrong and you get it blamed on you.*
>
> Kelly

Labelling of the girls as 'troublemakers' was more apparent in their mixed-ability classes where they believed that they were always watched.

> *They watch you to see if you're wearing jewellery, makeup or smoking behind the toilets.*
>
> Leanne

None of their families had teachers as personal friends so the girls had no experience of teachers in any context other than the classroom situation.

> *Teachers expect you to do what they did when they were young, but the world's different now.*
>
> Alison

All the girls regarded the school system as inflexible and not catering for individual differences. They felt they had been forced into a rigid, established structure of a traditional nature. From the outset of their high school careers they had trouble identifying with the traditions, ideals and expectations that were presented to them.

> *They hoped some of us would get up there [Wellington] and be in politics.*
>
> Jan

Such expectations were considered by the girls as irrelevant.

The 'option' system came in for criticism by both parents and girls. While still in the last year of primary or intermediate school, decisions were made about subjects for high school. The subjects chosen in the first year effectively locked them into low status subjects. These included home economics, clothing, typing/economic studies and Maori. It was interesting to note that Maori was an option open to these girls but French, German, Japanese or Latin were not. Essentially what had been presented as a broad range of options was in fact quite limited.

The majority of girls would have chosen to attend a coeducational school had the choice been theirs. In all but one case, the parents decided where their daughters would go to high school and it was the mothers who had a greater say in this decision. The girls saw their segregation from boys in school as a measure taken by their parents to keep them on the 'straight and narrow'.

> *I wanted her to go to a single-sex school so she'd concentrate and keep away from boys. That was the most important aspect.*
>
> Melanie's mother

This was not seen as fair treatment by the girls. Nearly all had brothers who had, did, or would attend a coeducational school. When asked why their brothers could go to a school of their own choice and they could not, they took it for granted that their gender made a difference.

> *Boys don't get into so much trouble. They don't go out and get raped.*
>
> Kay

They agreed that they got more work done at a single-sex school. They saw the presence of boys in the classroom as distracting. Yet boys were a source of fascination for them.

> *We get more work done here than at primary school. [What difference did having boys in the class make?] Everything. We like boys. We all do.*
>
> Tracy

Few of their parents spoke of satisfaction with the education system. Many were upset and even bitter when talking about their daughter's education.

> *I will not be pushed around by the system again. I wished I had known more about it when Kay was younger.*
>
> Kay's mother

It was apparent that all the parents of these girls were interested in their daughter's education. However, the girls did not perceive their parents in such a light.

> *My parents always fall asleep. They're so tired from work.*
>
> Melanie

> *They're always racing around doing something else.*
>
> Tracy

Parents caught up in the day-to-day struggle for survival do not have the time nor energy to focus on education as a priority. Their major concern at this stage of their daughter's schooling was that she be able to get a job. Most parents saw high school as the place where students learned skills to take them into the work force. Like their parents, the girls had difficulties seeing how much of what they learned at school was of relevance to future employment.

> *I don't see how my school subjects will be of use in the future. It's too hard to get a job these days and you might not get a job with clothing and stuff like that.*
>
> Teresa

Employment expectations

The girls were aware that obtaining jobs could be difficult. While at primary school one girl hoped to be a dentist, two hoped to be nurses, one a prison officer, veterinarian, air hostess, hairdresser, pharmacy assistant and minister. As their school careers evolved, their job expectations lowered. One girl still wanted to be an air hostess and a few were hopeful of work in the catering field or as shop assistants. The rest said they would accept whatever jobs they could find.

> *I'd like to be a vet's assistant now. I'm not bright enough to be a vet.*
>
> Teresa

Most girls saw themselves returning to school for a fifth form (Year 10) year, but none saw the School Certificate exam as a possibility or a necessity. By this stage their choice of jobs was a realistic assessment of what they were likely to get. One girl pointed out that educational credentials would not help her in the work force.

> *For working in a shop some people don't take you with School Certificate. They have to pay you higher money.*
>
> Kelly

At the beginning of the research the girls were old enough to leave school, but only three were prepared to do so and only if they could find a suitable job. These three said they were looking for jobs but looking in the newspaper was the only avenue that had been explored. The other girls saw themselves as not being ready to leave school yet. Some had discussed the idea with their parents but had decided to stay on for a while longer.

> *I haven't got a job. I sat down and talked to my mother the other day and no, I wouldn't like to leave.*
>
> Jan

Attitudes to unemployment

Most said they would be reluctant to go on the dole, but more than half said they would if they simply could not find a job. Nearly all the girls thought the dole was insufficient to live on. Generally their attitudes towards the dole were scathing.

> *It's the lazy people who are not bothered looking for jobs.*
>
> Donna

Both girls and parents explained unemployment as a result of individual inadequacy.

> *They say there's jobs there if they get out and look. A lot of the problem is the kids' attitudes. They think the world owes them a favour.*
>
> Jan's mother

Although the girls were aware of the high rate of unemployment they did not see this as affecting them. They believed implicitly that work was available for those who wanted it and unemployment was the fault of the individual.

Girls' self-esteem

Throughout the interviews it was obvious that these girls lacked self-esteem and confidence. Repeated failure at school had reinforced their lack of self-esteem. They continually 'put themselves down' and were sensitive to how they were seen through the eyes of other people. They all said that other people's opinions of them, worried them.

> *Some of the girls in my netball team are in high classes. Someone asked me what class I was in and when I told her, she nearly died. She was shocked. She didn't expect me to be in that class.*
>
> Jan

The girls felt their 'inadequacies' deeply and a few manifested their lack of self-esteem in a very disturbing manner.

> *I don't know what to do when I feel like killing myself. I get a needle and puncture my hands or I punch the wall or swear at my friends.*
>
> Marama

They all had trouble finding any achievement in their past of which they were proud. When they did, two girls cited playing sport as their greatest achievement. All the rest identified some kind of domestic work. This was not surprising considering the time spent on domestic tasks, both at home and at school, and the degree of expertise they had acquired over many years.

> *I don't know, just playing sport, I suppose.*
>
> Jan

> *Making my first sponge and it didn't turn out a flop.*
>
> Tracy

The girls were undoubtedly envious of some of the privileges that went with being in the top class, such as canteen duty and meeting visitors to the school.

> *They do work experience before we do.*
>
> Donna

In fact, the girls had no idea whether the top class did, or did not, do work experience first. They simply assumed that the top class got preferential treatment. It was natural for them to be last.

Group B (High achievers, low income)

These girls' homes were, in general, similar in their size and location to those of Group C. Most girls had their own room with facilities for doing homework.

The average family size for this group was 2.9. Half the girls were the youngest in their family. Essentially this meant they lived in adult families.

Only two families in this group did not own a car, in both cases because there was insufficient income. One family was supported by a sickness benefit, the other was a single income family supported solely by the mother.

Family income

While for this group, the fathers' occupations could be classified as working class, in general their incomes exceeded those of the low achievers' fathers. In some cases this was because of allowances, for example a sales representative earning approximately $255 per week also received commissions, a car allowance, a travelling allowance, accommodation and other reimbursements.

Home life

All the girls spoke of having a close relationship with their mother, some with their fathers as well. The mothers spoke of trusting their daughters and having confidence in their daughter's judgements. No mother indicated any measure of concern over the issues of control, freedom or discipline for her daughter.

> *Sharon likes us to know where she is. We don't worry. If she goes out with her girlfriends she's very well organised, even to getting a taxi home.*
>
> Sharon's mother

Friendships were very important to the girls as half of them spoke of having a best friend. Personal relationships with their friends and their families were easy going, warm and lacking in conflict.

These girls spent an average of 2.5 hours on domestic duties each week. However, three girls spent about 5 hours per week on a variety of domestic chores while their mothers were at work. Their mothers were dependent on them for their domestic input, particularly the preparation of the evening meal.

All girls in this group, including those who contributed to the running of the household, had a large amount of free time to devote to school work and other leisure-time activities. Four had had ballet lessons, two had studied the piano, one the guitar and one the clarinet. One girl was in an orchestra. Most girls in this group were interested in sport. For some it was an extremely important part of their lives. For example one girl had her own horse and spent long hours caring for it and preparing it for show-jumping competitions. Three others had represented their province in their chosen sport. The sporting and cultural activities available to two of the girls had been limited because of the financial circumstances of their families.

Fashion and money

On average the girls received $8.20 per week pocket money. The girls who worked at home were paid for this, boosting the average.

The top priority for all these girls was achievement at school. As a consequence they were prepared to curb their social lives. One girl had a steady boyfriend while the others were content to spend long hours on school work.

Conforming to fashion trends in clothes and make-up was a high priority.

> *You don't feel ready to go out if you haven't got make-up on.*
>
> Angela

> *Sometimes if you're with older people you feel better, you fit in better.*
>
> Michelle

However, their desire to conform did not lead to a gullibility, or wholesale acceptance of products pushed through advertising. For example, no girl in this group smoked, it was seen as anti-social.

> *I think it's disgusting. It just makes me sick. It stinks.*
>
> Sharon

Television viewing

These girls watched, on average, 15 hours of television a week. Some chose to do their homework in front of television. They watched a variety of programmes, some of which were termed 'rubbish' by their mothers.

Reading habits

All their homes got a daily newspaper. The girls read a variety of books, although in some cases these books were set school texts. While three girls mentioned 'adult' books (James Herriott, Jean Plaidy and Agatha Christie) most enjoyed books that were written for teenagers.

Attitudes to education

The mothers of five of the girls identified problems at some stage in their daughter's schooling. This was confirmed by the girls. The problems were both academic and social. In all cases the parents had been in touch with the school.

> *I had trouble with maths. I couldn't understand how to do fractions, so Mum went and talked to the teacher. I got extra books and that helped.*
>
> Helen

> *Melissa had trouble with learning to read. I was told she was a trouble stirrer. Her teacher was very inadequate. I felt I was a pushy mother. After underachieving she was put into the bottom Standard 1. Luckily she had a teacher who put a lot of time into her and got her up to the top of the class within a year.*
>
> Melissa's mother

Despite the fact that these girls were achieving well, they talked about many shortcomings within the school system, both at the primary and the secondary level. In general, they viewed the system as inflexible. While this posed problems, they had the personal resources to cope with most situations and saw other students' problems as greater than theirs. One aspect of high school life that drew criticism was the all pervasive aspect of competition, which the girls felt put them under intense pressure and stress.

> *Sometimes the teacher says you're competing against the next girl and your essay has got to be better than hers. That's what I don't like.*
>
> Michelle

However, at the same time they relished the sense of accomplishment that came with gaining a place.

> *I really like geography. It's the first time I've been top in class at anything and I like it.*
>
> Marie

They saw the education system in general, rather like a factory for the cloning of girls.

> *The image that this school expects us to project is just like any other school. That all the girls are good and perfect, neat and attentive.*
>
> Monique

Both parents and girls in this group criticised the option system at high school.

> *Subjects taken in the third form [1st year of high school] have to be taken right through. If it doesn't work out it can be disastrous. It could turn a child off their whole school life.*
>
> Jamie's mother

The girls spoke at great length about teachers. They did not see teachers as coming from a world different from theirs.

> *They're not different. They're just people doing a job. They have children and families.*
>
> Marie

They readily acknowledged the qualities of some teachers and the efforts made on their behalf.

> *You give them respect when they treat you as equals.*
>
> Michelle

The personalities and attitudes of their teachers were of great concern to the girls. They perceived the effect a teacher they saw as unsatisfactory could have on their future.

> *It's not that particular subject, it's the teacher. Very few people are going to take that subject in the sixth form now.*
>
> Marie

ter's schooling was that she be able to get a job. Most parents saw high school as the place where students learned skills to take them into the work force. Like their parents, the girls had difficulties seeing how much of what they learned at school was of relevance to future employment.

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>
> Teresa

Most girls saw themselves returning to school for a fifth form (Year 10) year, but none saw the School Certificate exam as a possibility or a necessity. By this stage their choice of jobs was a realistic assessment of what they were likely to get. One girl pointed out that educational credentials would not help her in the work force.

> *For working in a shop some people don't take you with School Certificate. They have to pay you higher money.*
>
> Kelly

At the beginning of the research the girls were old enough to leave school, but only three were prepared to do so and only if they could find a suitable job. These three said they were looking for jobs but looking in the newspaper was the only avenue that had been explored. The other girls saw themselves as not being ready to leave school yet. Some had discussed the idea with their parents but had decided to stay on for a while longer.

> *I haven't got a job. I sat down and talked to my mother the other day and no, I wouldn't like to leave.*
>
> Jan

Attitudes to unemployment

Most said they would be reluctant to go on the dole, but more than half said they would if they simply could not find a job. Nearly all the girls thought the dole was insufficient to live on. Generally their attitudes towards the dole were scathing.

> *It's the lazy people who are not bothered looking for jobs.*
>
> Donna

Both girls and parents explained unemployment as a result of individual inadequacy.

> *They say there's jobs there if they get out and look. A lot of the problem is the kids' attitudes. They think the world owes them a favour.*
>
> Jan's mother

Although the girls were aware of the high rate of unemployment they did not see this as affecting them. They believed implicitly that work was available for those who wanted it and unemployment was the fault of the individual.

Girls' self-esteem

Throughout the interviews it was obvious that these girls lacked self-esteem and confidence. Repeated failure at school had reinforced their lack of self-esteem. They continually 'put themselves down' and were sensitive to how they were seen through the eyes of other people. They all said that other people's opinions of them, worried them.

> *Some of the girls in my netball team are in high classes. Someone asked me what class I was in and when I told her, she nearly died. She was shocked. She didn't expect me to be in that class.*
>
> Jan

The girls felt their 'inadequacies' deeply and a few manifested their lack of self-esteem in a very disturbing manner.

> *I don't know what to do when I feel like killing myself. I get a needle and puncture my hands or I punch the wall or swear at my friends.*
>
> Marama

They all had trouble finding any achievement in their past of which they were proud. When they did, two girls cited playing sport as their greatest achievement. All the rest identified some kind of domestic work. This was not surprising considering the time spent on domestic tasks, both at home and at school, and the degree of expertise they had acquired over many years.

> *I don't know, just playing sport, I suppose.*
>
> Jan

> *Making my first sponge and it didn't turn out a flop.*
>
> Tracy

The girls were undoubtedly envious of some of the privileges that went with being in the top class, such as canteen duty and meeting visitors to the school.

> *They do work experience before we do.*
>
> Donna

In fact, the girls had no idea whether the top class did, or did not, do work experience first. They simply assumed that the top class got preferential treatment. It was natural for them to be last.

Group B (High achievers, low income)

These girls' homes were, in general, similar in their size and location to those of Group C. Most girls had their own room with facilities for doing homework.

The average family size for this group was 2.9. Half the girls were the youngest in their family. Essentially this meant they lived in adult families.

Only two families in this group did not own a car, in both cases because there was insufficient income. One family was supported by a sickness benefit, the other was a single income family supported solely by the mother.

Family income

While for this group, the fathers' occupations could be classified as working class, in general their incomes exceeded those of the low achievers' fathers. In some cases this was because of allowances, for example a sales representative earning approximately $255 per week also received commissions, a car allowance, a travelling allowance, accommodation and other reimbursements.

Home life

All the girls spoke of having a close relationship with their mother, some with their fathers as well. The mothers spoke of trusting their daughters and having confidence in their daughter's judgements. No mother indicated any

themselves: on an average they received $5.50 per week pocket money.

Through the range and diversity of their activities these **girls met boys but because** they placed such emphasis on **attaining high marks** in exams some (who had boyfriends) had chosen to limit their socialising with boys until time allowed it.

Fashion

They were aware of their individuality and desired to express it. For example they saw conformity in fashion as undesirable.

> *I used to like really trendy expensive things but now I like to be individual. I get things from all over the place, particularly op shops. It gives me a greater range of wardrobe.*
>
> Laura

None of the girls smoked. Despite the fact that a proportion of their parents did, they found it an unacceptable habit.

Television viewing

On an average the girls watched 11 hours of television per week. They selected a variety of programmes. They liked pop music programmes and some of the dramas and soaps. They also enjoyed educational and informative programmes. *Mastermind*, *Our World* and *Saturday Playhouse* were popular choices.

Reading habits

All their homes received a daily newspaper. However, their leisure time reading was characterised by its sophistication and diversity. The list included books such as *Sex Lives of Famous People*, *Lace*, *Tales of the Unexpected* and *Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy*.

Attitudes to education

Five girls in this group had had some learning difficulties early in their school careers. In four of these cases parents approached the school. Two received a positive teacher response and two a negative response.

> *The teacher was hard to convince that Laura wasn't slow The S.T.J.C. was hands off, don't interfere. The acting hea was placating but not much else. So I went to Speld [Specif Learning Difficulties Association].*
>
> Laura's mother

This case illustrates the point that parents who have financial resources and knowledge of the system have access to alternatives and options not available to others. Some of the parents pointed to boredom as the cause of their daughter's problems.

> *Her first year was frustrating. The teachers kept her on prereaders all that year. She turned off.*
>
> Rachel's mother

All the girls regarded the high school system they were in as inflexible. Individual differences were not catered for. The girls felt they had been squashed into a rigid, established structure. Well aware of their abilities, they felt pressured to perform, not only for themselves, but to uphold the name of the school.

This group was channelled into language classes by the option system. In hindsight they felt this an injustice. On the one hand they were told their school had a great range of subjects from which to choose. The reality of the situation was very different: they were locked into 'options' for at least two years. At the beginning of their third year at high school, with two successful years completed in the subject, faced with the external exam the next year, it was inevitable that they would take the subject again even when disenchanted with it.

> *I can't see the point in doing things I don't enjoy. I didn't want to do Japanese but was forced to do it. I was told they thought I was a languagey sort of person. How did they know?*
>
> Georgina

> *I would have liked to change from typing. I found it thoroughly boring.*
>
> Lucy

Most parents felt the school system did not cater for all children. The Maori mother commented:

> *I would like to see implemented something to do with their cultures. In the school system these are pushed aside. We just have to fit in the other bracket. A lot of kids today cry to be understood. Their identity is gone. School is essentially a pakeha system. Too many of our kids don't want to be there and don't achieve.*
>
> Aroha's mother

At this point in their schooling high marks were all important to these girls. School held a very important place in their lives.

> *School and school work has to be important. It takes so much of my time. I have school in the day and then do about four hours homework.*
>
> Anna

Teachers were judged by girls, parents and the school on their ability to help the girls achieve high exam marks. Teachers who frustrated the attempts of the girls to get high marks were criticised. However, the girls readily acknowledged the other qualities of some teachers and the efforts made on their behalf.

Employment expectations

Parents and girls had maintained high expectations throughout schooling. Career choices included lawyer, doctor, journalist, diplomat and veterinarian.

Attitudes to marriage

All the girls expressed a wish to get married, ideally at 25. Most spoke of completing their education, establishing a career, travelling and experiencing life before marriage could even be contemplated. They had definite ideas about husbands.

> *From a lot of the men I've observed I often think men don't mature. So when I marry I want someone who's grown up, someone you can talk to.*
>
> Laura

Two of the girls did not want to have children. Almost all the rest saw working and raising a family as quite compatible, and did not see rearing children as a purely female task. They expected their husband to play a major role in child care.

> *I think the husband should be equally willing to give up his job if you both choose to have a child. But you'd discuss all this before you got married.*
>
> Laura

Self-esteem

These high-achieving, high-income girls displayed a marked degree of confidence and self-esteem. This flowed naturally from the success they experienced both at school and in their other pursuits. They offered many and varied examples of what they considered their greatest achievement.

> *Prizes in the third and fourth form at school made my parents very proud.*
>
> Laura

One outstanding feature of these girls was their awareness of what was happening in the world. They talked freely about such issues as feminism, censorship, nuclear war and injustice and could see the impact of these wider issues on their lives.

> *I think the French testing at Mururoa Atoll is an injustice to the human race and all sea life.*
>
> Georgina

They appeared to be well aware of the paths their lives would take, and had quite clear-cut plans of how to attain their goals. Nevertheless they recognised that there were constraints on their lives.

> *The people who set society's rules are men so they do things for the betterment of man and not woman.*
>
> Emma

However, they were not prepared to concede that their sex was going to make a difference in shaping the courses of their lives. They were aware that they could do this, a crucial part being success within the education system, the culmination of which was a university degree. They could not envisage a future without credentials.

Discussion

The three groups were divided from each other by not only success and wealth, academic achievement and income, but also by, for example, different family life styles, by different expectations, by different attitudes to boys, fashion, recreation, the school, teachers, and people in power. After looking at these, several things became clear, having shown up in our interviews. Some seemed trite and obvious, but put together they point towards ways in which society, if it does want equity, must change the educational opportunities it offers.

1. Family income is not equitably distributed.
2. This limits the chances of the least well-off.
3. Power and influence are not equally distributed.
4. Patriarchy limits life chances for girls.
5. Schools maintain social inequalities.

Following these through:

1. Family income figures came mainly from official figures, and the interviews confirmed our calculations.

2. The obvious limits to chances to learn are in such matters as: no private space for the low-income girls, no car for trips to sports, guides, museums, holidays, the sea, the mountains, the bush, farms... all the places where learning can begin or be consolidated. The less obvious limits are those where low income means lives limited to child minding, housework, and helping overstretched single parents, beneficiaries or working mothers. The strain of being around the house so much is relieved with TV and occasional 'flings', which parents distrust and therefore try to control, thereby building up even more pressure to rebel. Such 'rich emotional lives' are not conducive to academic study.

Men whose working lives offer little satisfaction and whose pay packets are mean, are not emotionally equipped to be open handed, co-operative, and involved in their daughters' lives. There may be violence; there is certainly a tradition of rigid sex roles. Such roles are easily understood since clearly each sex is taking a 'proper' share of family support, men earning, women caring.

So low income creates a situation where tradition is the easiest path to follow and great respect for learning is not part of New Zealand's tradition. Where respect for learning is a tradition, as in the Chinese family, income obstacles are overcome at great sacrifice of life style for the parents.

3. Inequalities of power are clear in the parents' reactions to news that their daughter was doing badly at school. Most low-income parents were unable, or unwilling, to approach the school or teacher, or did not realise that they could. Those who did approach the school, did not get help. Only one high-income parent got no help when she approached a school, and she knew where (and had the money) to look for outside help. Maybe the schools were reacting, unfairly, to signs of wealth and academic expectations, but the most depressing discovery is that the low-income parents blamed *themselves* for their daughters' lack of achievement.

4. Low-income homes are typically run with strict sex-role divisions. This was most marked in the homes of the low-achieving girls, where the fathers had little involvement in their daughter's day-to-day lives. The strong mother/daughter dependency in these households worked to maintain the rigid division of labour. This meant that in the poorer households the girls had to spend much more time on household duties.

5. It is a liberal aim that schools should compensate for the inequalities in society. This means that all should be educated to the best of their ability regardless of income, sex, religion, race, etc. However, our data suggest schools do not compensate. Rather it appears schools maintain inequalities.

Recommendations

Until wealth is distributed equitably it is difficult to be optimistic about the future of low-achieving students in our schools. Some measures can be taken but the success of these measures will depend on funds and staff from government sources.

It is widely believed that in New Zealand education is free, yet parents are constantly called on to pay for numerous educational expenses. These include books, equipment, option expenses like dressmaking fabric, trips, concerts and cultural experiences. These are on top of expensive uniforms and sports clothing parents *must* provide. For some these costs are impossible to meet. It is pointless to say that *schools* should recognise this fact and make funds available. Schools are already stretched to the limit. It is the obligation of *governments* to give all students a 'fair go' in the system.' There is a clear, visible need for compensatory education for the disadvantaged, low-income student. Differential funding for schools to make this possible should be available if negative taxes or other wealth distribution systems are not.

From our research it was obvious that many low-income parents felt alienated from the school system. This commenced in the very early years of their daughter's education and was reinforced year after year. Parents care about their children's education but do not feel comfortable about approaching the school. Teachers who slip easily into the role of 'expert' need to examine that and realise that only when parents and teachers work together in an honest and *equal* relationship will the needs of the students be met.

Moves must be made to open schools to parents. It is vital that parents of children who are not achieving should feel free and comfortable to approach teachers at all times. Parents as 'consumers' of the system should have access,

by right. Schools should be perceived (and used) as a community resource. The notion that schools belong to the people in the community, especially children and parents, rather than to authority figures (teachers, Board members, and Ministry officials) should be boosted.

Efforts should be made to select teacher trainees who have abilities and attributes suited to meet the needs of children from all *income* backgrounds. Teacher trainees should be paid a livable wage so that recruitment can embrace people from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds rather than those whose parents have sufficient means to support them during training. Alternately, many high-value bursaries or scholarships should be available and well known.

At the high school level it is crucial that low achievers are identified and programmes that compensate for their deprivations are run. There are different ways of doing this. At this girls' school a home-room worked and worked well.

Other systems, such as mainstreaming, may be used. Whichever system is used, low achievers need a secure, non-judgemental atmosphere. They need a less competitive learning environment and they must stop failing. All students need to feel valued; these students are no exception. How this is achieved is up to the school. But ignoring these children, or pushing them aside, is unprofessional, cruel, and exacerbates present inequities.

A stimulating curriculum for low achievers is needed. It should incorporate (and build on) students' interests and life experiences. However, the utilitarian aspect should not be neglected: students need basic numeracy and literacy skills along with social and survival skills for their everyday lives.

The personal qualities of home-room teachers must include a sensitivity towards the lives of their students. Teachers who cannot appreciate the fact that these students are not inherently stupid and lazy have no place in home-room teaching. The life circumstances of the children must be understood and appreciated.

Notes

Christine Wilson is the home-room teacher at the New Zealand girls' high school where this research was undertaken.

Ann Dupuis is a PhD student in the Sociology Department at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Part of this research appeared as
Wilson, Christine (1986) *Poverty and Education Performance Among Working Class Girls*, Unpublished Research Report, Education Department, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.

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What Joyce Learnt From Her Mother

Item 4

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Nowadays it is widely assumed that professionals have a good deal to teach parents about how to educate and bring up children. Nursery school, for example, is seen, not just as a secure and enjoyable environment for children, but as a place where their language and intellectual development will be fostered by professional attention. This is especially claimed in the case of working class children, whose parents are believed not to develop their language adequately.

But in a new study of four year old girls at home and at school my colleagues and I became increasingly sceptical of these claims. Our tape recordings and observations showed that the homes provided a very powerful learning environment. Simply by being around their parents, talking, arguing, and endlessly asking questions, children have opportunities to learn about a wide range of topics, in contexts of great meaning. This was as true, we found, for working class children as for middle class children (though there were social class differences in style and approach). Because parents and children have a shared life, stretching back into the past and forward into the future, parents can help the children to make sense of their present experiences by relating them to the past. Children's own intellectual efforts, and their persistent curiosity, are an essential part of this learning process.

In contrast, the intentionally "educational" initiatives of the teachers often seemed not only flat, but unfruitful and ineffective. Consider the following conversation between Joyce, a working class girl who is nearly four, and her nursery school teacher. Joyce was rolling out clay when her teacher sat down by her.

TEACHER: What's that going to be, Joyce?
CHILD: (No reply)
TEACHER: How are you making it?
CHILD: Rolling it.
TEACHER: You're rolling it are you? Isn't that lovely? Oh, what's happening to it when you roll it?
CHILD: Getting bigger.
TEACHER: Getting bigger. Is it getting fatter?
CHILD: Yeah.
TEACHER: Is it or is it getting longer?
CHILD: Longer.
TEACHER: Longer. Are my hands bigger than your hands?
CHILD: My hands are little.
TEACHER: Your hands are little, yes.
CHILD: It's getting bigger. Getting long. And long. Look!
TEACHER: Mmmm. What's happened to it, Joyce?
CHILD: Got bigger.
TEACHER: It has. My word.

This conversation contains several features which crop up over and over again in teacher-child conversations at nursery school. Consider, first, the context in which the conversation takes place. Why are the teacher and child talking at all? Clearly it is not because Joyce has anything she wants to say to the teacher at this particular moment. Rather, the conversation is taking place because the teacher sees a chance to introduce certain educational ideas (in this case, to do with size and shape) into the child's play.

The method Joyce's teacher uses to carry out this educational aim is to ask her a series of "testing" questions. Apart from the first question – "What's that going to be?" – they are all questions to which the teacher already knows the answer. Joyce does not respond with enthusiasm to this approach. She fails to answer the first question and when she does respond her replies are fairly minimal. Apart from a brief moment when Joyce wants her teacher to see what is happening to the clay (and says "Look!") the conversation is very much a one-sided affair.

What is the justification for this kind of questioning?

It is suggested that the teacher benefits through learning what the child is capable of, what she knows and what she doesn't know. On this view, the questioning is primarily a type of assessment. The other justification is that the child is stimulated by such questions to think about aspects of the situation which had not previously occurred to her. Through answering the teacher's questions she will begin to develop her own cognitive linguistic skills. On this view, then, such questioning can constitute a means of learning.

On the strength of this particular conversation, it is hard to justify either of these claims. Take, for a start, the idea that the teacher is getting an accurate assessment of Joyce's capabilities. The problem here is that most of Joyce's replies are so ambiguous, one can't say whether her understanding is deficient.

For example, she says the clay is "getting bigger" as she rolls it out. This might mean that Joyce really thinks there is more clay as a result of her rolling – as Piaget claims that children who fail his conservation tasks, actually believe. On the other hand, she may simply be using the word "bigger" in a loose manner to describe the increased length of the clay.

Joyce's teacher picks up this amibiguity and asks if the clay is getting fatter, but again it is hard to interpret Joyce's reply. Does she really think the clay is increasing in width as she rolls it out, or does she simply assume that the teacher is using the term "fatter" to refer to length?

The teacher then introduces a somewhat bizarre note into the conversation by asking Joyce, "Are my hands bigger than yours?" Presumably, she's trying to check on Joyce's understanding of "bigger," but the child's reply is not very informative. True, she says her hands are "little," but it is not clear if she really understood that her teacher's hands are "bigger."

Developmental psychologists are well aware of the difficulty of establishing what children understand by words like "bigger" or "more," and the teacher's failure to make a successful assessment is not surprising.

The other argument for questioning young children in this manner is that it will help to promote their cognitive or linguistic development. Is there any evidence that Joyce's development has been promoted here?

Again it is hard to be sure, partly because we lack criteria of how to judge what Joyce might have learnt, and partly because we do not know what Joyce's teacher was trying to teach her. The teacher might have been trying to point out that clay gets longer and thinner as it is rolled out. If so, then it is not clear why she did not say so directly. Moreover, she had no reason to think that Joyce did not know this.

But maybe the teacher was trying to establish that the word "bigger" is inappropriate here, and to encourage the child to use the term "longer." If so, then she seems to have partly succeeded, for the child does spontaneously say the clay has got "long." This mastery is short-lived, however, for the child then goes back to where she started: the clay has got "bigger."

On the face of it, it would seem that neither teacher nor child has learnt much from this conversation. Yet there is more than one kind of learning. What Joyce may well have learnt is experience in the kind of conversation she is expected to have with a teacher. For the teacher, this conversation may simply have confirmed what she and her col-

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leagues told us before the recordings were made: namely, that Joyce was a girl whose language was "poor," Joyce's apparent confusion with size words, together with her general uncommunicativeness and minimal replies, are all likely to perpetuate the picture which the teacher had already formed.

Compare the feel of Joyce's conversations at home. Here, she is having a sandwich for her lunch, while her mother makes a cup of tea and then starts to prepare the evening meal:

CHILD: Mum, it was good to have something to eat while you was at the seaside, wasn't it? (Mother cuts sandwich.)

MOTHER: Was good, I agree.

CHILD: Well, some people don't have something to eat at the seaside.

MOTHER: What do they do then? Go without?

CHILD: Mm.

MOTHER: I think you'd have to have something to eat.

CHILD: Yeah, otherwise you'd be (unclear) won't you?

MOTHER: Mmmm. When we go to David's school we'll have to take something to eat. We go on the coach that time. (Joyce and her mother are going on an outing with an older child's school.)

CHILD: Mmm. To the seaside?

MOTHER: Mmm. Probably go for a little stroll to the seaside.

CHILD: Mmm? Yes, I still hungry.

MOTHER: When?

CHILD: When we was at the seaside, wasn't I?

MOTHER: We weren't. We had sandwiches, we had apples.

CHILD: But we, but when we was there we were still hungry wasn't we?

MOTHER: No, you had breakfast didn't you?

CHILD: But, we were thirsty when we got there.

MOTHER: Yes, suppose so, yeah we were.

CHILD: What happened? We wasn't thirsty or hungry.

MOTHER: Why weren't we? What happened?

CHILD: Well, all that thirsty went away.

MOTHER: Did it?

CHILD: Mmmm.

This conversation illustrates both the real limitations of Joyce's ability to express herself, and the way in which she struggles to express complex ideas despite these limitations.

In this she has varying degrees of success. In the first part of the conversation she is able to bring out and contrast two separate but related facts: that it was good to have something to eat at the seaside; and that other people didn't have something to eat. These two statements can even be seen as the premises of a logical argument, with the implication being: So what do other people do?

We will never know if Joyce would have made this step by herself, for her mother makes it for her. Later on in the conversation, however, Joyce is less successful in conveying her meaning, despite her mother's attempts to help her. All the same, one can only admire Joyce's persistence as she struggles to express herself, culminating in the delightful creation: "All that thirsty went away."

We do not know what prompted this conversation; it is possible that eating a sandwich in the kitchen reminded Joyce of eating sandwiches at the seaside. However the puzzlement arose, the situation allowed her to express it. Joyce and her mother were together in the kitchen, both engaged in their different activities with time and space for Joyce's musings to be expressed and allowed to develop.

Her mother plays an important role in the conversation. By her support and responsiveness, she helps Joyce express her meaning, and follow through some of the implications of what she is saying. The mother's role is not just a responsive one. She tells Joyce about a planned trip to the seaside with her brother's school. The point about this new information is the way it is linked to what has gone before. The mother and child link a past event with a future one, enabling the shared world of experience to act as a backcloth to their conversations. The creation and referral to a shared world is a typical feature of many conversations between mother and child. We believe it is of fundamental importance.

At school Joyce's conversational ability had appeared to be much more limited. This was a general tendency amongst the girls in our study. They often appeared subdued with the staff, speaking more briefly than to their mothers, less often answering questions or contributing spontaneous remarks, and much less often asking questions. On average, they asked their mothers 26 questions an hour; but their teachers, only two. Of those questions that were asked at school, a smaller proportion were curiosity and why questions than at home. What we called "passages of intellectual search" – i.e., conversations in which the child puzzled over something she did not understand – were entirely absent.

Working class girls like Joyce were particularly affected by the school setting. They less often used language for complex purposes when talking to their teachers than to their mothers, and very rarely asked them "Why?" questions. Instead of using the staff as an intellectual resource, as Joyce used her mother, they tended to turn to them for help with aprons, and assistance in quarrels with other children.

The net effect was to make them appear lacking in confidence and immature, compared with the middle class girls. Perhaps in response, the teachers themselves used a less mature speech style when talking to the working class girls. They made less frequent use of language for complex purposes when addressing the working class girls than the middle class girls. They were more likely to initiate conversations with working class girls by questioning them; their questions were pitched at a lower level; and they gave them a more restricted range of information. They were less likely to ask them for descriptions and more likely to ask them intellectually easy questions concerned with labelling objects and naming their attributes – like "What's that called?" or "What colour is it?"

Asking for colour names was, in fact, a particularly frequent staff conversational gambit with the working class girls. It was certainly the case that a number of these girls were unsure of colour names. Given that the staff saw "naming colours" as an important educational aim, this approach could be justified. In a wider context, however, doubts arise. By focussing on this intellectually simple task, they failed to provide the children with opportunities for more advanced conversation. The low-level conversations that ensued must have reinforced their own belief that the children were only capable of simple dialogue.

A tendency to adjust one's conversational level to the perceived level of the partner's speech is an almost universal tendency of both adults and children when talking to younger partners, and probably assists language development. In the situation we are describing, however, the effect can only be to reinforce the children's use of more immature language. In fact, far from the nursery school providing a compensatory language environment for the working class girls, both the quantity and quality of the language addressed to them at home was superior.

On the very threshold of the children's school careers, the teachers were responding to the apparent, rather than the real, abilities of the working class children, tending to underestimate what they could achieve, and presenting them with inappropriately low-level tasks.

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Step-families

by **Ruth Webber**

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ONE DIVORCE can create two step-families, and as the pool of men and women available for remarriage grows the increase in step-families outstrips the rate of divorce. In 1981, 29.1% of all marriages in Australia involved one or both parties who had been previously divorced.

During 1984, 1985 and 1986, 29 couples took part in a research project on step-families, attending a six session educational programme entitled 'Living in a Step-family'. In the 1986 programme they completed pre- and post-tests on marital adjustment and self-esteem plus a weekly problem rating scale. The analysis showed the extent and severity of problems they encountered, as well as how and to what extent the programme helped.

The participants ranged from couples yet to co-habit to couples who had been together for seven years; people not previously in a live-in relationship to others in a third relationship; some in formal relationships, others not. The major part of the study was concerned with the issues and problems confronting the parents and step-parents but here we are interested directly in their children.

Children in Step-families

STEP-PARENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF THEMSELVES are unrealistically high and they frequently strive to achieve a pattern that is like their original family but which is not suitable for a step-family. Children in step-families are rarely consulted about either the divorce or the new step-family so are frequently the silent partners in the parent's new life. The bringing together of people who have separate histories and different loyalties can result in tensions and complexities which were not found in their families of origin.

The most important issues covered in the study were:

the lessening of closeness between child and natural parents

resentment

sexuality

step-sibling rivalry

behaviour and discipline

access

anger and sadness

Lessening of closeness between child and natural parent

REMARRIAGE OFTEN MEANS THE LOSS of a close parent-child relationship as the child must share the parent with a new adult and perhaps other children. A remarriage will often mean a move to a new location and this in itself causes all sorts of problems. My study found that parents were very concerned about the difficulties of building and maintaining a relationship with their own child, particularly if they saw the child only when he or she came on access, but they were often unable to see ways of improving the relationship.

I suggested that they should make an effort to spend time alone with their own child in order to demonstrate to that child their continued interest in, and affection for him or her. Often the child's peer group will provide the only stable relationship during this period. If the family moves this stability and the support that goes with it is lost as well. With a new neighbourhood comes a new and unfamiliar home, school, friends and so on. These provide their own set of problems for the child.

On top of all this, there is the problem of surnames. The mother usually takes the new husband's name and in doing so appears to have a closer connection to her step-children than her own. A discussion with the couples on the course on whether step-children should change surnames heightened their awareness of the children's feelings.

Teachers and other professional people need to be aware of the embarrassment or pain it causes, especially to the child, when a step-parent is incorrecty referred to as 'your Mother' or 'your Father'.

A number of people on the course said that as the access parent, their role was generally confined to entertainment and excluded most routine caretaking responsibilities. They felt cut out from the child's day-to-day life because the custodial parent never gave them the opportunity to become involved. This often had the effect of the child believing that the access parent was not interested in his or her life.

Resentment

STEP-CHILDREN'S DIFFICULTIES are rarely associated with a new family only. Problems go back to the time before the actual divorce. Most children have great difficulty accepting the separation and divorce though they may not show signs of it. Feelings of resentment and fear are often repressed and since they are never mentioned this is often interpreted as the children accepting the breakdown. The children often saw only glimpses of their parents fighting or arguing and because they do not know the full story, must fill in the blanks themselves.

Different children in the same family will have different perceptions of the situation. Because young children see themselves as the centre of the family, they interpret their parents' behaviour has being about themselves. They imagine the breakdown is their fault. The child harbours feelings of guilt which breed resentment and anger, and this in itself results in much of the behaviour adults find it difficult to handle.

The course attempted to alert parents and step-parents to the ways a child may have perceived the separation and divorce. Children who have not given up the fantasy of the reunion of the original family are especially likely to have difficulties when parents remarry. Children are not usually included in courtship and are forced into a situation in which they may not wish to belong. The parent may be happy in the new relationship but the child may see it as the total loss of his or her parent to the new step-parent leading to fierce competition for attention between the child and the newly arrived adult.

There appears to be a close relationship between the guilt a child feels and the fantasy that many have about their parents reuniting and 'living happily ever after'. Some children actively seek to make this fantasy a reality by creating havoc in the new relationship. A number of step-parents in the study gave examples of the techniques used by the children to try and get rid of the unwanted step-parent. Understanding the motive and taking action to demonstrate that the new relationship is permanent seemed to help the situation.

It is important that the step-parents neither force children to choose between themselves and the other (absent) parent, nor try to replace a lost or absent parent. It is also vital that step-parents and natural parents refrain from criticising the absent parent: children become distraught if their loyalty to one parent or another is challenged.

Sexuality

SEXUALITY WAS A PROBLEM for some of the group but not for most of it. It depended on the age and sex of the children whether this was seen as a problem.

The children are faced with a completely new relationship between the parent and the step-parent. Before the separation, they were used to a distant, if not antagonistic relationship between their parents and are now faced with adults who are always touching, kissing and disappearing into the bedroom. Apart from the embarrassment this may cause to the child, sex becomes prominent in their thoughts, especially adolescents who do not find it difficult to imagine 'what is going on in there'.

The increase in affectionate and sexual behaviour in the home may contribute to the loosening of sexual boundaries. The only tie the step-family shares is social and there is the possibility of emotional attachments growing over time. Young adolescents with step-siblings may become very aware of each other sexually, and being terrified of the emotions they are feeling may turn to enmity towards one another in order to 'defuse' this sexually explosive situation. Attraction between step-child and step-parent gives rise to similar crises.

Step-sibling Rivalry

FRICTION BETWEEN STEP-SIBLINGS was of concern to most group members. When two families try to integrate, difficulties arise as to where the children belong in the family. An eldest child may no longer hold his or her position in the family. All of a sudden the privileges that go with the position are lost. A young child may find another of similar age as a step-sibling, causing feelings of displacement and resentment.

Some children going on access were showered with expensive presents from the non-custodial parent. This caused jealousy from the home children who did not receive like gifts.

Another topic that created a great deal of interest with parents was that of the 'invaders' and 'invaded'. The 'invaded' being the children already living in the family home and the 'invaders' being those who come to the house for access visits. The territorial issue is not only uncomfortable for the 'invaded', but because the home is so important for security in a family, the 'invaders' feel a lack of security in what they perceive is a stranger's home. The home family may have a feeling of being the main family with the 'invaders' feeling a sense of inferiority. The 'invaders' often have no bed or place of their own and the 'invaded' must give up or share their room. To the 'invaded' their home is no longer their own. It is therefore important that the visiting children have a bed and, if possible, a place that is seen to be theirs.

Bitter rivalry and jealousy can arise between live-in children and visiting children. Visiting children have attention showered on them and the resident children are temporarily displaced. Parents are often afraid that if they do not make the most of the time with the access children they will grow away from them.

A number of step-parents complained that the access children were not expected to straighten up around the home, to do jobs or to have clearly defined rules. This appeared to cause resentment and antagonism as live-in children saw the visitors 'getting away with murder'.

New sets of relatives, such as grandparents, cousins and others can be a source of comfort for the children. However, unequal treatment and discrimination by these new kin can also give rise to anger and resentment.

It is especially difficult for children if their stepbrothers and sisters go to the same school and even more so if they are in the same year level. A child who regards the school as the only safe and predictable place in his life can find no escape from the pressures of the new family if his stepbrother or sister is in his class as well. It is a good idea to separate the two children in this case and either have them in different classes or, if this is not possible, send the children to different schools.

Behaviour and Discipline

CHILDREN IN STEP-FAMILIES are often traumatised, suffering from repressed feelings and anxieties, resentments and recriminations about having been the cause of the marriage breakdown. These feelings may lead to lying, stealing and bad behaviour that is really a plea for love, attention and recognition. The parents on the course admitted to seeing similar patterns of behaviour in their own children.

Each family has its own set of rules to deal with unacceptable behaviour but unfortunately a step-family has two sets or more. A step-child may be subjected to two completely different sets of disciplinary action in the one home, depending on who does the disciplining, and a different set again when at the home of the 'other' parent.

Separation and divorce can mean a child is split between loyalties, by belonging to both parents. Many parents use the child as a pawn in their struggle, as they vent hostility towards one another. Children need to love both parents and to be loved, but some parents insist that the child love only one of them. Many families are in difficulties because the children do not feel that they are allowed to love both parents. A display of love for one parent may be regarded as disloyalty to the other. On top of this they are unsure as to what extent they are expected to love the step-parent as well.

The 'Living in a Stepfamily' programme attempted to alert its members to this dilemma and many found it a relief to know that they should not expect to love the step-children in the same way as a natural child. Likewise they saw the need for children to feel free to express affection to both natural parents without being made to feel guilty.

Access

MEMBERSHIP IN TWO HOUSEHOLDS can give a child a wide variety of experiences and additional role models from which to learn and grow. However, many children find shuttling back and forth a constant disruption to social and homework routines and feel a lack of control over the situation. Each access visit brings with it pre-visit anxiety and post-visit depression.

Pre-visit anxiety is a continuum of intensity, with excitement and mild anxiety/pleasure at one extreme and frank phobia at the other, while the extremes of post-visitation depression can either be a mild unease arising out of the experience, or grief and mourning for the lost family. It is important for those working with step-families to assist the parents and step-parents find ways to minimise these stressful times.

One suggestion is to give children 'time out' when they return from access so that they can make the adjustment back to the household in their own time. Another suggestion is to encourage the adults not to discuss access, custody

or financial matters with the other parent at the doorstep. Access times should not be the place for parents to air their grievances. Children are happier if they retain a good relationship with both parents and if they are able to care for more than two adults without disloyalty being an issue. Most young children are able to respond to a warm and caring step-parent if there is little animosity between the natural parents. It is helpful if this can be pointed out to step-parents during a step-parenting programme.

Teachers need to be sensitive to these pre- and post-tension periods in children who are about to go, or have been, on an access visit. Monday morning after access weekends can be a difficult time in schools. Homework or projects may not be done because the child has not been in his or her usual environment.

Anger and Sadness

VISHER AND VISHER found among children of divorces universal feelings of loss and grief and often these feelings keep reappearing. The children go through the mourning process, whether or not they show it outwardly. When parents announce their intention to separate the child is at first unable to accept it: this is part of the period of denial. This is followed by other stages of the mourning process. Usually guilt and anger are followed by despair and depression and the angry outbursts that results occur both at school and at home.

Those who work with step-parents should outline to them the stages of grief experienced as a result of separation and divorce and suggest ways of helping children through these stages. Many of those on the 'Living in a Stepfamily' courses stated that they found a discussion on grief particularly helpful.

Summary

THE RESEARCH PROJECT showed how complex step-families are and how many problems are theirs alone. The roles of members of step-families are not clearly defined and this ambiguity means that some families need to seek professional help. A clear message from the study is that more understanding of the nature of step-families is needed by the general community, psychologists, social workers and teachers so that support can be provided.

We need to affirm that a step-family is a valid and acceptable family type. Teachers and schools have a vital role to play in the life of a child who is experiencing the trauma of entering a new step-family. It is important that teachers understand. The child may be ashamed that she is no longer living in a 'normal' family and will need assurance that step-families are 'real' familes and are acceptable families.

Teachers may help through classroom activities designed to show that a variety of family types are acceptable. Reading to the class stories of children who live in other types of families helps accept family types. A genogram based on one of these stories helps the class to see that other family types are acceptable. The children could then do their own family genogram. Showing films of children who are living in step-families but who are doing the normal things children like to do, also helps to validate step-families. Make sure that such films do not have an evil stepmother or father in them as this would not be at all helpful.

Teachers can make sure that both parents have access to the child's reports, photographs and teacher-parent interviews. Parent-teacher evenings can provide the opportunity for adjustment matters to be discussed. Teachers should be aware that some children may want to buy two Mother's or Father's gifts in order not to offend either parents or step-parents. School record forms also need to be modified in many schools – they should not discriminate against these families by failing to provide room for the information about step-families (and thus by default not recognise them as an alternative family). The school, being sometimes the only haven that the child has, can assist in his or her emotional well-being by continuing to provide stability.

Counsellors and family therapists can help step-families in developing new communication patterns and styles. When two different families join together to become one, the potential for communication problems is great. Through the use of preparation courses or workshops and with the help of a trained counsellor, couples can work out their inevitably different values, establish family boundaries, clarify roles, develop faith in their parent-child relationships and accept (as temporary) the initial rejection of the step-children.

Counsellors and leaders of step-parenting programmes can assist in helping step-parents work out their relationship with the 'other' biological parent. It is also important to help parents to develop satisfying relationships separate from their parenting role. A good relationship between the partners provides the children with a realistic role model for their own future lives.

Notes

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The full research project, from which this item reports a part, is
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TRANSITION TO SCHOOL:

THE CHILDRENS EXPERIENCE

By Margery Renwick

NZCER

Jeff Walesby

Transition to School:
The Children's Experience

By Margery Renwick
NZCER

Kevin, I would say is generally unconcerned about starting school – but when he does remember he seems quite happy and has spells of great excitement about it. He is rather on a high at the moment with the acquisition of a new school bag and coat for school.

The only indication of fear perhaps occurred some time ago whilst we were talking about the progression from kindy to school. Kevin asked, 'Why do we go to school – what for?' I told him about these special skills we need to learn and some time later he said – 'but what if I just can't learn?' I felt really sorry for him and since then I have illustrated through various things he does – recognising his name and other letters as the beginning of reading, and being able to draw circles and crosses as the beginning of printing, to build up his confidence in this respect.

I can see that the simple fact of being a 'schoolboy' makes Kevin feel a whole lot more grown-up, better and rather important.

A parent's diary

Rachel is extremely excited – obivously it is all-important for her to start school as this will corroborate her own feeling of having grown up. She is now becoming daily more anxious – she can't read or write yet, which she thinks she should be able to do. She said this evening that she doesn't want to go to school because of the visits to the dental clinic. She isn't impressed by our assurance that she won't have to visit the clinic on her first day at school. She is worried she hasn't got her school bag and lunch box yet. Her last remaining close friend goes to school this week and Rachel says she doesn't want to stay at playcentre on Friday, her last day there. She does seem more irritable than usual and less able to settle at home. She listens avidly to all the girls tell her of school rules – 'Can't call out.' 'Don't run.' 'Don't go anywhere without asking.' She may be oppressed by all this, but I don't think so; she seems to want to conform because school people do.

A parent's diary

Starting school: a milestone

In a child's eyes starting school is a rite of passage, associated with increased status. Children even link physical growth with this enhanced status – one boy said, 'I bet I grow a couple of inches.' Starting school is a period of transition and adjustment – a moving from the known to the unknown. The two diary extracts, kept by parents the week before their child started school, show how important parents are in helping their child to navigate these uncertain waters.

School as the 'beginning of learning'

While it is common for children these days to expect to enjoy school – to look forward to it as a 'neat place' where they will make friends and be happy – children also regard school as a place where you learn by doing real work. They expect to work hard, to please the teacher and to learn more important things than they have done at pre-school. Playing is a thing of the past, an attribute of the pre-school world. However, children are also concerned about the hidden school curriculum. It is important for both Kevin and Rachel that they have the correct possessions, the school bag and lunch box. Friends are also important. Rachel does not want to stay on at pre-school once her best friend has left. She is also anxious about visiting the dental clinic which she associates with starting school. And she has an avid desire to understand the school rules.

One issue raised in the diaries is the common myth that school is the beginning of learning. You can hear Kevin's anxiety when he says, 'But what if I just can't learn?' Rachel, on the other hand, feels that she should probably be able to read and write *before* she starts school. We need to remind ourselves that the age of starting school does not relate to any particular stage in children's development. However, myths have developed about the changes that are supposed to take place at this time, some about the nature of learning itself. When we surveyed teachers, pre-school teachers and parents in the course of the *Going to School* research project, most believed that there are significant differences between the job of a new entrant teacher and that of a pre-school teacher, and they tended to support this belief with comments that pre-school is a place where children play and have social experiences, whereas school is a place where children work and learn. Two parents we surveyed commented,

> The pre-school supervisor wants a child happy. The teacher wants a child to learn.
>
> A pre-school teacher is mainly concerned with social development. A new entrant teacher is mainly concerned with developing academic skills.

And a kindergarten teacher,

> When leaving kindergarten, the child is socially adjusted so is ready to learn.

Chris Pratt, writing in the *Australian Journal of Early Childhood*, contrasts the concepts of development and learning. Under a **developmental** approach the *growth* of knowledge in children is explained by maturational factors. Under theories of **learning** the emphasis is placed on the ways children are *taught* how to acquire knowledge and skills. I was reminded of these two contrasting concepts when a parent wrote,

> Steven woke today and said he didn't want to go back to 'bossy old school'... We discussed how at kindergarten you can play all the time, but you don't learn things, whereas at school the teacher tells you what to do and that's how you learn. 'In that case', said Steven, 'I don't like learning things!'

Discontinuities between pre-school and school

The tradition out of which our junior schools have developed is a learning one, onto which a developmental approach has sometimes been grafted. Pre-schools by contrast are grafting learning concepts onto a developmental approach. If teachers at the two different levels have different views of what their role is, it is not surprising that children experience discontinuities. In a recent study for the National Foundation for Educational Research in the UK likely discontinuities are itemised:
At school,

1. Although surrounded by a wealth of material and equipment, the child will have limited access to it, because of less freedom of choice of activities, and a more time-tabled day. At pre-school a child can choose freely most of the time. At school choice tends to be limited to occasions when work has been completed, thus emphasising the work/play distinction. There are set periods for 'play' and set periods for 'work'.
2. The gross motor activities common at pre-school are now confined to physical education periods and playtime.
3. The daily programme allows for less art and tactile expression. Constructions are smaller.
4. There is less fantasy play.
5. The balance of a child's curriculum has moved to verbal and symbolic activities; the 3 R's account for ⅓ of all activities.
6. There is a marked increase in the amount of dead or non-task time. There is three times as much queuing, waiting and lining up. This, with cruising and other non-specific behaviour accounts for 17% of the time.

There is always a danger in transferring research findings from one system to another, but I think many Australian and New Zealand teachers would recognise these discontinuities. In the British study some of the time spent in waiting and lining up will be explained by children queuing for school dinners and attending school assemblies neither of which would be common in our junior schools. However, the reduction in freedom of choice, and the increased need to 'sit still and listen' are certainly characteristic of a five-year old's experience. One of the first impressions we had in the pilot stages of our own study was that children starting school suddenly had to attend to, and act on, far more verbal instructions than they had been used to at pre-school.

Junior school teachers believe there are many advantages in children attending a pre-school, particularly for the social skills they learn. Teachers also see pre-schools as being a preparation for schools because as one put it, 'Children are better house trained'! However, teachers have three common criticisms of habits children may learn at pre-school: there is too much freedom of choice so when children get to school they think they can continue to choose what they want to do all day; pre-school activities do not have to be finished so children tend to flit from one activity to another; at pre-school when children lose interest in a particular activity they are not expected to put things away and clear up after themselves.

Perhaps teachers themselves have contributed to the division between pre-schools and schools by too jealously guarding their own professional territory. Some new-entrant teachers claim, for example, that pre-school teachers encroach on school territory. This view is not held by pre-school teachers themselves. Rather the reverse in fact. Pre-school teachers express frustration that they are not free to extend the children in ways they feel they should because they would be accused of introducing children to activities which are regarded as the preserve of the school.

They feel they are not able to extend the more mature children and introduce them to more formal aspects of language learning, particularly reading.

Start school: learn to read

Reading in many ways symbolises the beginning of school, and is a good example of how institutional boundaries influence expectations. Learning to read is frequently associated with the aura and magic of starting school. A parent wrote.

> While a young child might love a pre-school teacher, she holds her school teacher in greater esteem because she actually teaches her to read.

Not that it is only parents who equate school readiness with reading readiness. One teacher, for example, in opposing an earlier school starting age wrote:

> We already have too many immature children starting school before they are ready to learn to read. Earlier school-starting age would mean more reading problems.

If adults hold these views, it is not surprising that learning to read may loom large in a child's mind. Children may even expect to learn to read on their first day; it will be instantaneous, a kind of spontaneous combustion on walking through the school door.

There is a further possibility of discontinuity if there is an emphasis on the development of oral language at the pre-school and on written language and beginning reading at junior school. In a recently published study Marie Clay, while commenting favourably on teachers' ability to stimulate early reading and writing behaviour, raised some questions about the development of oral language, particularly amongst ethnic minority pupils. She wrote:

> . . . it seems that oral language is used to facilitate progress in reading and writing but few if any activities are designed specifically to develop oral language control. Perhaps because language learning seems to be done so early by many children in the majority culture we have forgotten to arrange for learning opportunities whose *main* aim is to provide opportunities to learn more about the use of the language for talking. A balanced programme for new entrants who do not score at average levels for age on language tests would include oral language activities in *their own right*.

It used to be a common practice in New Zealand for new-entrant classes to begin the day with a free-play 'developmental' period. It provided a link between the experiences a child had at pre-school and those of school, and also provided an opportunity for the oral language experiences advocated by Marie Clay. There are now fewer such programmes, although the reason why is not always clear. In some cases teachers judge children have become bored with this sort of activity because of their pre-school experiences; in others the day now starts with written language activities, often based on the Donald Graves approach to 'process' writing.

That pre-schools emphasise oral language may itself be a myth. In a recent study Anne Meade found that in the pre-schools she visited there was less adult/child talk than most early childhood educators would expect. Children had plenty of conversations with other children but not with adults. In the six centres studied there were very few sustained conversations between one adult and one child and some children, particularly boys, had no conversation with an adult at all.

In child care centres, sustained conversations between adults and children were most likely to occur not during play but in care-giving situations, for example, toileting, preparation for rest, and preparation of food. These domestic situations are akin to those at home. Tizzard and Hughes found that children at home have more sustained and stimulating conversations (with their mother) than they have with adults at school. At home children made a more equal contribution to the discussion, spoke on a broader range of topics, and parents, unlike teachers, asked questions to which they did not know the answers, really wanting to know.

In a new-entrant room I observed recently I was struck by the fact that the children who seemed to be less motivated to settle to tasks by themselves and to indulge in 'cruising behaviour' were boys. Which leads me to the next issue: starting school is not a standardised process. The range of individual experience is very broad indeed. Two factors of particular importance are (1) is the child a boy or a girl? (2) is the child from the dominant culture or a minority ethnic group?

Boys and girls

Continuity of experience for young children entering school and moving through the junior school, is important. We need to consider whether or not the experiences we provide are as appropriate for boys as for girls. In my own study a checklist based on the teachers' comments about school readiness was circulated to 300 parents with a child aged 4 years 11 months. While most of the parents believed their child to be looking forward to starting school and to be socially mature, if the five-year-old starting school is a boy he is likely to bring with him fewer of the skills many new-entrant teachers would like five-year-olds to possess than a girl will bring. Although he will probably be confident in his relationship with adults and children, he usually will be less able than a girl to express himself clearly. Seventy-five percent of girls are described by their parents as 'easily understood', but only 51% of the boys are. More than three times as many boys as girls have 'speech which can be understood only with some difficulty.'

Although he will probably be able to recognise his own name, it is much less likely that a boy will be able to print it: 82% of girls, only 59% of boys. He will probably be able to count up to 10, but he will be less likely than the girls to recognise the numbers: 60% of the girls could, only 37% of boys. He may not recognise any letters of the alphabet, or only a few. It is unlikely that he will recognise all of them: girls are four times as good at identifying letters and about twice as many girls as boys can identify all of them. Although he will be completely independent in toilet matters and, in the view of his parents at least, always blow his nose when necessary, he will probably have problems doing up his shoes: 85% of girls have this skill, but only 25% of boys. Many parents would recognise their son in this description:

> He can count confidently up to 6 and recognise the numbers up to 6. He hasn't shown a great interest in learning to read but he says he'll learn when he goes to school. He can put his shoes on the correct feet, but can't tie them properly. He blows his nose when told to, but finds sniffing easier.

One wonders if teachers, in planning their classroom activities, take sufficient account of possible differences in skills boys and girls may bring with them into the classroom. How significant is it that when five-year-olds move from a predominantly female pre-school environment into a predominantly female junior school environment not only are girls likely to possess more of the skills thought to be desirable for early success at school, but they also have a female role model with which to identify?

Minority ethnic groups

Similarly, we need to be sure that children from minority ethnic groups move into a school where the programme reflects, or is at least sensitive to, their own cultural background. The most illuminating study I know in this area is Brian Jackson's account of six children, each from a different ethnic background, who all live in one street in a North of England town, all starting at the local school together.

In New Zealand, although there are still many schools, particularly in the South Island, where the pupils are predominantly Pakeha (European), coping with cultural differences and providing appropriate experiences for children from Polynesian (Maori and Pacific Islander) families is one of the most challenging tasks facing New Zealand junior school teachers. Children are now entering schools from Te Kohanga Reo, pre-school 'language nests' run by Maori adults dedicated to fostering the Maori language and cultural values. Teachers in New Zealand must ensure some continuity of the teaching of the Maori language and the values of Maori culture. The New Zealand system of admitting children one at a time, with emphasis on an individual welcome and individual attention, is perhaps not the most appropriate way for children coming from Te Kohanga Reo where the ethos is the group. It has been suggested that schools should receive groups of new entrants, and their parents, rather than individuals. Separate new-entrant reception classrooms are less appropriate for Maori children than whanau (family) groupings where older children share in the induction of routines and look after younger members thus promoting the concept of group support.

In Australia, Aboriginal children also have problems with the ethos of the school. The Australian researcher Christie has shown, for example, that:

> Aboriginal children's failure in school can to some degree be attributed to their misunderstanding of the process of formal schooling. In the view of Aboriginal children (at least those at Milingimbi), school is a ritual and success in learning English and in 'reading, writing and arithmetic' is bestowed on those who attend, who are good and who work in the sense of being 'busy' but not 'thinking hard'... in Aboriginal rituals spectators are just as much participants as the dancers. Thus, Aboriginal children are frequently content to be spectators in classroom interactions that are aimed to promote learning and do not perceive that the role of spectator is ill-designed to enable them to achieve success in that context.

Children from non-European cultures have often been used to learning through looking, listening, talking, doing, and using an oral tradition, rather than a literary, written, tradition.

These objectives are met in the best junior classes where programmes are based on meeting the interests, needs, and abilities of children, through providing opportunities and experiences so that children can learn naturally and confidently. Teachers are encouraged to establish learning environments and programmes, using resources flexibly, and to acknowledge the various social and cultural experiences of the children, in order to help each child reach her or his potential. Their programmes acknowledge the following principles:

- children enter school at their own particular level of attainment;
- children learn at their own pace;
- children should have responsibility for initiating some of the learning and the situation in which it takes place;
- children learn best when they are actively involved;
- children need to talk about their experiences, interests, and problems;
- experiences must be meaningful and enjoyable for the child;
- experiences must provide their own reward;
- experiences must provide motivation for future learning;
- no one approach is suitable for all children or for any one child all the time;
- no one grouping situation is suitable for all children or for any one child all the time.

The childrens' experience

Junior school teachers are providing experiences that are meaningful and enjoyable for children. My colleagues and I questioned one hundred five- and six-year-olds about the things that they enjoyed about school and those things that they did not enjoy. With few exceptions they talked enthusiastically. Most children had a positive self image; they liked school and felt confident that they could do the activities the teacher provided; most of their likes revolved around classroom activities – painting and drawing, writing stories, various free choice activities such as leggo and dressing up and, less frequently, reading and maths. Playing with friends, outdoor games and activities were also mentioned, but to a lesser extent. Nearly all their dislikes related to things that went on outside the classroom, particularly fighting and being bullied or teased by older children. Not having anyone to play with or 'when my best friend doesn't want to be my friend' was also important.

From the children's point of view if a teacher makes them feel that she has their particular interests at heart, is able to enter enthusiastically into their activities, and appreciate their efforts, they usually regard school as a good place to be. A teacher, however, can be approved for a whole range of reasons quite as individual as the children in her care. Perhaps she always says good morning and listens when the children talk to her, perhaps she laughs a lot, plays the guitar, is young and pretty and dresses well, perhaps she is a man or just happens to 'wear glasses like mum'.

Children are attracted to large, bright, cheerful, sunny rooms which look 'alive' and 'busy', because of the way the teacher arranges activity corners, work displays and furniture. One parent wrote:

> My child enjoys the room itself. It's full of interesting books, displays and posters, including posters telling a story round the wall.

Although the personality of the teacher and the classroom environment are central to a child's feelings about school, classroom activities are also important. Because children expect to 'learn' when they go to school, particularly learn to read and write, activities helping them to achieve this ambition give them much satisfaction.

While gregarious children may be delighted at the number of children who are now potential friends, for most, to be able to sit next to an old friend from preschool is what matters. The behaviour of other children is the single most important cause of anxiety about school. Five-year-olds starting school are thrust into an environment where there are many more children than they have had to come to terms with before. They are often frightened by the bullying behaviour of the older boys, rough children who attack unprovoked, or throw away possessions.

Some children hate staying at school for lunch, eating sandwiches every day, and find lunchtime not long enough. Some children have difficulty in accepting and conforming to the demands of classroom routine and organisation. A common complaint is having to sit on the mat for too long a period. Some parents report a general anxiety experienced by their children because of not knowing what is expected of them. It is quite common for a five-year-old to be frightened of breaking rules not completely understood in the first place. Why can't they play with friends in other classes? Why do they have to ask to go to the toilet? Why can't they go outside when they want to? Where, when, and why do they have to line up? They may be worried about getting lost, or being in the wrong place at the wrong time. What is that bell for? Is it playtime, lunchtime or home time? As one child put it:

> That bell rings all the time. Bells ring in, bells ring out – in, out, in, out, all day long like that.

Settling into school also means behaving in a way acceptable to the teacher. Many teachers place great stress on children being 'disciplined', 'obedient' and 'accepting the authority of the teacher'. They approve of 'non-aggressive children' who 'do what they are told, and not just when they feel like it'. But not all teachers are like that. For me I would be happy with any teacher and class programme if it meant at the end of the day, a parent was able to write as one mother did:

> Ian came out of the class all smiles and talked non-stop. He asked me straight away if school will be open tomorrow because he wants to go every day it's open. At bedtime he said, 'When I go to sleep I want to dream about school'.

Notes:

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This *set* article is adapted from a paper given to the First Years of School Conference, Sydney, May 1986.

Some of the same material has also been published in
Early Childhood: Ideals/Realities, Proceedings of the Australian Early Childhood Association, 17th National Conference, 1985.

The quotations from parents, children and teachers, and the whole research project can be read further in
Renwick, M.E. *To School at Five: The Transition from Home or Preschool to School*, Wellington: NZCER, 1984.

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The suggestions for how Te Kohanga Reo children should transfer to school comes from
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In Graham's paper the idea that spectators are as much participants as dancers in rituals is attributed to
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For further Australian perspectives see
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The too hard basket?

CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Cathy Wylie

JUST after I finished writing the final report of a study following 32 children through their first three years of school, I was trying to tell a friend who had a six year old child, and another who had just passed out of the junior school, what we had found. It seemed to the teachers, I said, that where as they saw a spiral or zig-zag process of learning in the classroom most parents had a linear, arrow-like view of progress.

'Okay', she said. 'But I've just found out that Lucy can't read! And not because the school told me. I had to find out myself. Yet she's had all these glowing reports about how well she's doing, what a joy she is to have in the class. I mean – what's the point of that if she can't read? If she's behind others the same age?'

I outlined some of the research findings on how learning can be undermined by summative assessment, streaming, and continual grading of children relative to each other. 'You're probably right', she said, 'but that's not what counts.' In the workaday world, where only one person can get the job, comparative ranking seemed much more important.

Then we talked about what action she had taken. Every day during the school holidays she worked on her child's letter and word recognition. She spoke to the teacher, who promised that her child could do the Reading Recovery programme. The tag 'recovery' was unwelcome, but she felt some intensive effort was necessary at this vital stage of her child's learning. She was further upset when she learnt (from parents) of several other bright, assertive children who had also 'ended up' in Reading Recovery. Yet she was careful in her communication with the teacher, and unwilling to complain to the principal. She did not want her children to suffer any resentment which a complaint might cause.

I was saddened by her tale. I wondered if she would have been so sceptical about diagnostic approaches to learning and assessment if there had been closer, more informative communication from teacher to home. She needed specific information on the child's progress, but also about the classroom programme, and the signs of growing understanding and skill, especially those which parents can see (and help build).

And the power of the teacher this story reveals! When teachers discussed what helped, or hindered children's progress they kept coming up with a picture of the *well-meaning but undermining parent*. What a contrast!

Why is it that parents and teachers can have such different perceptions of the teacher's role, and of what is important or useful in children's learning? We have some useful insights to offer from interviews with the 62 teachers and 32 parents of the study children during their first three years of school. From this study came some ways in which the differences in perceptions could be bridged, for the benefit of child, teacher, and parent.

From the Research

Parents' understanding of what their children are doing at school, and the meaning of those activities, comes mainly from:

- what comes home with the child (talk, homework, reports);
- parents' experience of the child's classroom and teacher (mainly meet-the-teacher sessions and informal contact at the classroom door);
- comparison with other children – in other schools, or older siblings – or the parent's own memories of schooling;
- mass media descriptions and evaluations of curriculum, assessment, and standards.

How reliable and useful is this information? Media treatment of education would need another article on its own! It can be helpful; it can also be piecemeal, imbued with editors' and reporters' own lack of expertise, or coloured with preconceptions and the need for a 'good story'.

Children themselves are frustrating sources of information about the school day! We should not be too surprised. For they are actors in it, not observers. Parents learn of the unusual rather than usual, and about play (friendships) more than about work. They hear about 'ability groups' when children move in or out of them.

> You've got to really prompt him to find out what he did during the day. Unless there's something that really sticks in his mind – like the fire engine came today.
>
> If I make a wrong assumption about a group he'll correct me, whether his best friend is in it, say. It's background information for him.
>
> Often she can't tell you what you want to know. She talks about what the teacher says, exciting things, new subjects, themes, when she recognized that numbers were following a pattern, books she's read, songs they're singing.

What comes home

Parents' most regular source of knowledge about their child's progress is what comes home in the schoolbag. It was rare for the children in our study to bring home anything but reading books in the first year. These were joined by phonics or spelling words in the second year; one teacher who thought spelling homework made no difference to the children's advance sent it, simply to satisfy parents' faith in homework. Some sums and project work came home in the third year.

The emphasis on reading in children's homework in the initial school years reflects its prominence in the junior school curriculum. But it also reflects the activity-based approach to mathematics in the widespread (NZ) *Beginning School Mathematics* material, which means that there is not a lot of maths written down in the first years.

Teachers were often ambivalent about sending writing work home, until it had been 'published', that is, polished and perhaps printed out. Their emphasis on *process writing* does not meet some parents' expectations that correct spelling should come before the writing of narrative; this explains some of the ambivalence. They also wanted to have previous work of the children available at school as a resource against which to assess progress and diagnose continuing needs.

But the underlying reason for so little homework in the junior schools was that teachers felt that children should not be worked too hard – or in ways which might undermine the learning process in their classrooms.

> I discourage teaching at home. They're only six and seven, and we work very hard. If they are really slipping – and none of them are, apart from a little girl in maths – I wouldn't necessarily get back to the parents because it is an added pressure and worry on the children, and could end up in a real mess.

> What I'm aiming for is that they love reading. If they don't get it all right, it doesn't matter. But some parents think it's cheating if they tell the word from the picture, and they cover up the picture. You have to educate parents. Too many children get put off from that – it can be dangerous if they're told they're no good.

Homework

Homework crosses the two worlds that each child lives in: home, and school. It blurs the boundaries. But by the same token it is also an important part of informing parents of their child's progress, and of the kind of work which is done in the classroom.

> It's a bit early to say yet how he's doing. He's progressing in the books he reads, but I'm not sure about maths, because it's done at school.

> We can see how she's going by the ticks in her book.

Reports

What about school reports? Parents did not often mention these as sources of information or say much about them (other than that they received them). In one sense, they were taken for granted. However, the main themes amongst those who commented were that end-of-year reports were frustrating – since it was too late to act on any information they contained, or to contact the child's teacher (usually changing next year as well) – and that it was helpful to have information on the child's social behaviour. Only one of our ten study schools sent reports home mid-year to parents of second year children, and only three to parents of third year children.

All the school reports bar one (in the third year of school) reported children's progress individually, in relation to curriculum tasks or goals. Some were more specific than others. Two parents, harking back to their own school days, desired a more comparative form of reporting.

Given the amount of time teachers spend on school reports, and the black cloud that working on reports wraps around the end of the school year, their low profile with parents raises some questions about their usefulness. Perhaps other channels are needed to encourage parents' attention to, and support for, their children's learning.

Parents at school

Most of the parents had been into their child's classroom at some time in all three years of school, though not on a regular basis, particularly as the child grew older, and often not for very long. Those who had were usually appreciative of the changes since their own school days.

> I was brought up under 'you do this right, if you don't, you're naughty'. Whereas they're being brought up in 'You do this. If you can't, you do the best you can'. It's a completely different style, which I think is lovely. I didn't have any trouble in the old system, but I saw kids having trouble – one of my best friends, and she and I were probably on a par intellectually.

But most parents did not know how children were assessed, and some of those we spoke to were quite mistaken in their understanding of what happened at their child's school. There was a prevailing, though not universal, trust that work was assessed, progress monitored – and that parents would be told if there was any difficulty.

> I have often wondered what they base progress on. I suppose they give them tests and things, but I'm sure if there's any problem, if he wasn't keeping up, the teachers would tell me.

Interviews

Parents often mentioned the parent-teacher interview as a useful source, or reassurance, of their child's progress at school.

> The first term parent-teacher interview was good. They said he had been picking up things. He misses out some of his words, and uses others in the wrong place, and I correct him.

> We don't have a clear conception of where she should be, especially in maths. We did ask specifically about that at the parent interview, and accepted the teacher's judgement that she was doing fine.

Some gained knowledge to help them help their own child.

> The teacher pointed out to me letters that Shane was doing wrong, and I could do them with him, show him how to do them... I'm really quite happy with his schooling and the progress he's making. He can read quite well now.

"...Parents expect that correct spelling should come before writing stories."

Assessment beyond the school

A quarter of the parents in our study worked out for themselves where their child was in relation to older children in the family, friends who went to different schools, or their own schooling.

> My daughter was far more advanced at reading than Oliver is but I don't know that her comprehension was always as good.

> We're not sure what sort of progress she should have made. It's hard to have a benchmark. She seems to be doing perfectly well, to be competent...I've noticed one child in particular who she sees from time to time who seemed to be further ahead in terms of her writing ability than Emma was, writing stories herself. And the parents of the child made comments on it. I think there are children who are progressing more quickly than Emma – but all the ones we can compare with are going to read perfectly well and reach a particular level. Whether one will reach a level six months ahead of the others, who knows. They're all going to be perfectly competent.

Uneven progress

The last quotation brings us to a central issue for contemporary teachers: what kind of evidence of progress is most appropriate and useful. Progress, in the eyes of the teachers in our study, was a spiral, rather than linear process – or sometimes a process with sudden, unpredictable leaps followed by plateaux, or very gentle rises. Examples were given to us of children whose rapid speed of skill acquisition in the first few years of schooling was followed by levelling, or some decline, so that they could be surpassed by others whose initial school progress had been less marked.

Teachers now also generally accept that children learn at different rates, sometimes through different routes. The research evidence which says that internal motivation is very important to children's learning is also accepted. Though most classes did their reading and mathematics work in ability groups, only one school used the colour codes of reading book levels to name their groups. Stickers and stamps were given out in many classrooms, but they were given to encourage as well as reward; and some teachers kept close records of who had received what, to ensure an even spread. Assessment was mainly through individual running records and curriculum checkpoints rather than class tests of the same items.

New Zealand junior school classrooms are remarkably free of the standardising format of American classrooms with their strong emphasis on tests and grades (even to the extent of putting the results up on classroom walls). Nonetheless, some practices (such as ability grouping) which allow comparison and suggest there are reliable standards to measure individual children against, are still present, and they were indeed used by the parents in our study to satisfy themselves (or not) about their children's progress.

The shift in teaching to diagnostic rather than summary assessment means that 'results' often need knowledge of the curriculum to be fully understood or appreciated. They need more translation for parents, especially for those raised themselves on fixed 'standards'.

How can the classroom teacher ride at the same time the two horses of (1) encouraging internal motivation and (2) providing evidence of progress in summary form for parents and others beyond the classroom process? It is not a dilemma that is about to go away: on the contrary. There is increasing emphasis at the national level on accountability and standards, and these set frameworks which classroom teachers cannot ignore. New South Wales, for example, introduced compulsory basic skills testing in literacy and numeracy in the third and sixth grades in 1989. The new New Zealand assessment framework is designed to provide information on levels of achievement at school entrance, and at Form 1 (Year 7) and Form 4 (Year 10). The New Zealand national assessment is likely to have an item-bank format, allowing teacher choice. If this format is accepted, it will provide more flexibility than the New South Wales system. Nonetheless, in New Zealand, concerns have been expressed that use of the 'framework' could foster inter-child and inter-school comparison. Also the framework of levels makes it easy to slide (back) into thinking all children must meet a set standard at a certain stage or age, despite the very real difficulties in deciding or defining that standard.

Parents undermine teachers?

Our interviews found teachers worrying about parents undermining their best efforts with old fashioned attitudes or discouraging teaching techniques. Parents' approach to reading, writing, and mathematics may differ from those used today in the classroom. Old school techniques such as rote learning and copying have been overtaken. It is often hard for teachers to see the 'help' parents give their children at home as positive if it comes in these forms. Yet, like the teachers' own balancing act (with the distribution of stickers and stamps, and the names they give ability groups so that they do not order the children into a frozen hierarchy of ability and expectation) perhaps it is the total context of learning which matters most rather than individual practices. Recent research material on home reading certainly suggests that different approaches to reading and texts can complement rather than compete with the school approach (with its emphasis on fictional 'stories') and this even when there are different cultures in the home.

> "...Our interviews found teachers worrying about parents undermining their best efforts with old-fashioned attitudes."

Teachers' concern about parental practices at home is also an expression of the ambiguity they feel in their joint responsibility, with parents, for children. How can they ensure that parents are indeed supportive?

The teachers in the study thought it was important for parents to support their children. As far as school work was concerned, they wanted parents to hear their child read at home, check or help with their spelling (if they were doing some writing or spelling at home), and show interest in their work and progress. Parents were seen as interested if they came to collect their child after school, stayed to look at the classroom and their child's work, signed the reading books sent home (and actually listened to the child), turned up to parent-teacher interviews, and contacted the teacher to let her know of any concerns, or changes in the home.

> Parents put pressure on children to do extra things, they always expect them to be on top form... one parent does multiplication tables with his child, yet the child has no concepts for anything. Parents want to know if their child will go onto Standard 1 (Year 2), as though that was the point to aim for as quickly as possible. They won't accept differences in children, and be supportive and say, 'Well done'. If one child they know reads twice as fast or twice as many books, they want their child to do the same.

They worry about the spelling, but not the flow of stories in writing.

> Earlier in the year we had parents dashing in at 3 o'clock, opening the child's tote bag, searching through all their books to see what they've done during the day and saying 'Where's your reading book?' The kids are just shaking. And we try to say to them, 'Look, the children have been at school 5 hours, they've had enough, they want to go home and have a break.'

Teachers try to protect children's confidence, motivation and free time. But in the process they – and the children they care for – may miss out on the benefits of closer work with parents. Well-informed parents are more likely to be supportive of both teacher and child. This becomes increasingly important in devolved school systems (such as New Zealand's has become, and as some states are heading toward in Australia) for two reasons. First, parents, as trustees, are now responsible for school policy and employment. Second, there is an increasing emphasis (or reliance) on local resources. This means that there are growing gaps between schools in different communities.

The human, financial and cultural resources available to a child at home also make a difference in children's learning, often favouring children of middle class (and assertive) parents. Improving the resources parents can provide, or making better use of those resources, is therefore increasingly vital to the success of teaching, particularly in low income areas.

The value of parental support and understanding may seem obvious to many classroom teachers, and to others simply another item to add to the list of good-things-to-be-done, but-where-will-I-find-the-time? Many have tried innovative sessions for parents only to find that those who turned up were 'not the ones who needed to'. But the issue will not go away, and every school and teacher would benefit from devising a kit of various strategies for working with parents, ranging from 'preparing the ground', through, keeping information flowing both ways, to, dealing with potentially awkward situations when they arise.

Certainly there are questions of time to be resolved. Often teaching is seen as consisting of one teacher with a class, face to face with children. But planning is part of good teaching, as are other activities which teachers undertake outside the classroom. Perhaps it is less important than we think for children to spend the whole of their day with a single teacher.

Effective occasions with parents

In our study there were few occasions on which teachers had made an effort to reach parents to explain their approach to the curriculum. These occasions were in fact all a great success.

> They had a lovely night in the middle term when they got parents down and they went through a typical writing session and how they model and get ideas and they got parents writing and parents found it really hard!

> By watching Suzanne for about half an hour one morning writing I have a much better idea of what writing is about, and the importance of the flow of writing rather than getting everything correct. I don't want more bits of paper.

Parents also need to know how to best approach teachers to find out about their child's school life and progress, or to express any unease they feel. One strategy schools and individual teachers could use is to launch the year with a session involving role-play and good humour (perhaps using training videos such as John Cleese has made?) to bring teachers and parents together. And avoid episodes like this:

> I find it difficult to respond to somebody who comes to the door in class time with, 'How's he getting on?'. Because **he**'s there, and so's everybody else. And that's when you say, 'fine, no problem'.

Sharing responses to situations like this is a useful focus for staff development. It's also important to analyse existing home-school channels such as homework (or what goes home), teacher-parent interviews, and reports, to see whether they are meeting the needs of both teachers and parents, and whether they could be made more vital.

The development of teaching as a profession has continually pushed forward our understanding of the ingredients and processes of learning and what can be achieved. Perhaps working with parents, translating the work of the school into the terms of the home, and vice versa, is the next frontier to be crossed.

***set** would like to publish another item on the topic of school-parent communication – a 'what works' compilation of teachers' own innovations and practices. So please write to us if you have useful ideas to pass on: **set**, P O Box 3237, Wellington, New Zealand.*

Notes

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This research can be read in more detail and context in *Learning to Learn: Children's Progress Through the First Three Years of School* by Cathy Wylie and Lesley Smith, published by NZCER.

The research literature on the importance of children's internal motivation is well covered in:
Crooks, Terence J (1989) The Impact of Classroom Evaluation Practices on Students *Review of Educational Research* Vol 58(4), pp 438-481.
and
Dweck, Carol S (1989) Motivation. In Lesgold, Alan and Glaser, Robert (eds) *Foundations for a Psychology of Education*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

The research findings on how learning can be undermined by ranking and streaming can be found in:
Kamii, Constance (ed) (1990) *Achievement Testing in the Early Grades: the Games Grown-ups Play*. Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
and
Kealey, Martin (1984) Meats and veges: an ethnographic study of two grammar school classes. **set** No. 2, 1984, item 10.
and
Raven, John (1991) *The Tragic Illusion: Educational Testing*. New York: Trillium Press.

Material on the growing gaps between schools in different communities can be found in
Gordon, Liz (1993) *'Rich' and 'Poor' Schools in Aotearoa*. A paper presented at the Annual Conference of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education, Hamilton.
and
Wylie, Cathy (1992) *The Impact of Tomorrow's Schools in Primary Schools and Intermediates 1991 Survey Report*. Wellington: NZCER.

Material on the difference home resources often make can be found in
Lareau, Annette (1989) *Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Intervention in Elementary Education*. Lewes: Falmer Press.
and
Nash, Roy (1993) *Succeeding Generations – Family Resources and Access to Education in New Zealand*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.

Material suggesting that home approaches to reading and text which differ from those of school can complement rather than undermine school teaching is contained in
McNaughton, Stuart (1991) *Emergent Literacies, Psychologies of Development, and Equity* Research Unit for Maori Education/Te Tari Rangahau O Te Matauranga Maori, University of Auckland, Monograph No 2.

A useful description of teacher training in New Zealand, based on following students who started their training in 1989 through until they started teaching, is given in
Renwick, Margery, and June Vize (1993) *A Window on Teacher Education*. Wellington: NZCER.

Two useful resources for teachers wanting to work with parents are:
Ramsay, Peter et al (1990) *'There's No Going Back' Collaborative Decision Making in Education, Final Report*. Hamilton: University of Waikato.
and
Wickham, Leon, and Parents (undated) *TeacherPak – a Book about Teacher-Professional Parent Partnership*. Palmerston North: Kanuka Grove Teacher Centre, Palmerston North College of Education.

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Best of set.
FAMILIES
& SCHOOL

Parents Teaching in Schools

Jacqueline McGilp
Australian Catholic University, Aquinas Campus

Nikki Slade

IF PARENTS are to help with the teaching in a school, what do we need to consider? In an Australian primary school in 1986 parents helped teach painting, poetry, music and dance to nine-year-olds. From this experience we can learn the advantages, pleasures, pitfalls and problems.

In this school the arts are regarded as part of the core curriculum. Professional artists had been hired and have performed and taught successfully in the school. However, it was argued that competent parents could be used if they were approached to volunteer, and were available at a particular time. No cost would be involved. Also, it was envisaged that parents with interests and skills (but not at professional level) also could assist with children's artistic experiences if given the opportunity. It was also hoped that if parents contributed to the arts, the levels of parental involvement would change.

Levels of Parental Involvement

Previously most parents in the school had been fundraising or just an audience. The challenge was to introduce parental involvement according to their initiative, competence, power and responsibility. Training some parents was regarded as necessary; the format was unspecified.

There were traces of the 'closed door' attitude by teachers, the feeling that children's social education should be left to the home and that education at school should be left to teachers. We will see how these feelings fared.

The following figure shows how levels of parental involvement might be modelled.

Levels of Parental Involvement

Level 1	Audience
Level 2	Fundraiser
Level 3	Spectator
	Aide Performs tasks or instruction under the teacher's control
	Organiser
Level 4	Instructor
	Professional
	Non-Professional
	Skilled
Level 5	Adult Learner
Level 6	Policy Maker
Level 7	Advocate

Levels 3, 4 and 5 are the ones the study investigated.

Generally the *Professionals* were the first parents to try teaching. These parents had qualifications in the arts and one parent in the group had teacher training. The second group were *Non-Professionals*, parents who had formal qualifications in teaching but had not practiced as full time teachers for some time, or, were parents with competence in some aspects of the arts but without teacher training. The third group was the *Skilled* group, consisting of parents who had acquired a skill in a training session. In some instances they were assisted by *Organisers*, who were parents who assumed responsibility for materials and equipment but did not instruct the children. A teacher was present at all sessions conducted by parents.

Questionnaires, videoing, field notes, observations, interviews and case studies were used.

A look at each level

Level 3, Organiser

It is natural for people who are keen to help a school to be asked to do jobs well away from the classroom, such as assisting in the tuckshop or a clothing pool. At this school natural organisers became much more closely involved after some minimal training. For example, one Organiser spent time at a school art workshop learning how to organise materials, then, in partnership with another parent, organised art materials during school art excursions. The second parent Organiser became involved because the first had invited her. Organisers, I found, could assist usefully in the classroom and some could involve other parents in projects, usually with benefit.

Level 4, Professional

The Professional parent has qualifications in the arts and works full time in an art. In this school those who helped had many skills in different art forms, used fluent artistic discourse, were not dependent on the class teacher, and set high expectations for student competence. These characteristics are illustrated in the following case study.

Case Study – Elms

Elms was a Professional parent, who operated beyond a passive role and became a 'partner in educational creativity'. He had been up to this time an untapped source for improving children's learning. Elms operated at Level 4 because of his qualifications which included fine arts expertise. After working with the children Elms made suggestions for the curriculum.

Elms was the owner of an art gallery; he dealt in paintings. Elms volunteered to work with the children in the painting cycle even though he was not teacher-trained. Elms decided to invite the children to an arts exhibition involving the works of Absalom, Pro Hart and Sawrey and to instruct the children in the characteristics peculiar to each artist's work. For example, Elms said, 'All artists have peculiarities and one thing Absalom does well is paint skies'. Also, 'Pro Hart (paints) colourful pictures with figures and a brand of humour'. Elms communicated the important aspects of the artists' paintings by showing the children the painting, pointing out the features and asking the children if they had any questions. A child asked for example, 'How did he get the bumps!' Elms answered simply by explaining that the bumps were petrified trees not anthills.

Elms chose to instruct the children in the use of an arts catalogue and the organisation of his gallery. He set the task of recognising the different artists' work on display and helped the children identify paintings by use of the catalogue. He monitored their responses by talking to the children. Elms taught the children for approximately one hour. He did not require teacher assistance.

Elms himself decided on the content of the session, but the teacher affirmed this procedure and organisation beforehand. While no difficulty occurred in this particular session, difficulties were encountered in sessions when the Professionals concentrated on the acquisition of knowledge which they considered important and took little regard of the children's mastery of skills. This approach usually resulted in them losing touch with the children.

I found that the competence of parents can be used to advance children's artistic learning. Not all Professional parents are suited to instructing a whole class, but they could all provide individual assistance to children, supporting the teacher's role.

Level 4, Non-Professional

Some of these parents had formal qualifications as teachers but had not practiced full time for some time. Others had no formal qualifications but were competent in some aspect of the arts.

I found that those without pedagogical training could operate as successfully as those who had been trained; they were just as able to instruct the children in the artistic task. With both groups the children completed the tasks competently.

There was a significant difference between them however, those who had not previously taught, gained confidence, but were still the less confident group at the end. All these Non-Professionals used artistic discourse at a somewhat less sophisticated level than that of the Professional but kept a harmony between verbal instruction and demonstration. They were also rather more dependent on the class teacher for advice, specifically about handling children and organisational procedures, for example, one was hesitant in giving permission for children to work in pairs, while another needed advice about storing equipment.

Case Study – Hobson

Hobson, a Non-Professional was a parent without artistic qualifications. He was interested in sketching and cartooning and was self taught. He had not previously worked in the school, yet, this project showed that he could instruct the children in drawing, therefore he could play an active role. Hobson commenced his session by showing the children samples of the task, which was to draw a blue shark and Donald Duck. In directing the exercise Hobson required the children to identify the basic shapes, for example, the basic shape of the shark was an oval. Hobson showed the children one of the methods that he used to shade sketches. This required the use of tissue to gain effect in perspective. Hobson directed the children's efforts by encouraging them to make their shading darker, to shade within the area and to apply pressure. He showed the children how to overcome difficulties, for example, when a child could not fit her drawing on a page he helped her to make a composite picture.

Hobson taught the children in the manner which the class teacher could not; the class teacher could not give step by step instruction to enable the children to sketch Donald Duck. Hobson was, however, dependent on the class teacher for direction. He needed advice about the best position from which to instruct the children and for information regarding storage of materials. In an interview at the end of the session Hobson indicated that his confidence had increased in handling the children. He had had experience of teaching out of school and said he found it easier to work with children in the school than in his home.

I found that the Non-Professional parents possessed skills and could specify a learning goal, give an explanation and/or demonstration and actively supervise the children's progress. The skills possessed by parents added variety to the interpretation of the curriculum. And these parents did not need training.

Only a little time is needed to prepare to involve parents if they possess skills and are supported by the staff. At this level, however, parent involvement depends on the school taking steps: these parents did not volunteer without the school's encouragement.

Level 4, Skilled

These parents were not experts. At this school they were parents who had indicated their interest in the arts, showed knowledge and skills at an initial meeting and acquired knowledge and skills during training sessions. These parents had the ability to learn and teach skills in a particular art. On the whole they had insufficient command of language to describe the activity but, by demonstrating, they conveyed their intentions. Most of them depended on written lesson plans to guide the instruction they gave.

Case Study – Stack and White

Stack and White were parents who worked as a team. They had both attended a training session to learn the technique of marbling.

White read an autumn poem as an introduction to the lesson and then told the children that the activity was to learn the technique of marbling using autumn colours. However, the children were required first to draw an autumn picture using pastels. In fact the parent directed the children to draw in crayon which was a misleading instruction.

White then gave a verbal explanation of the technique of marbling and then Stack and White demonstrated the technique. White's explanation was not clear. However, the demonstration helped the children understand. During the session the teacher intervened when the children obviously had misunderstood the instructions and organisational procedures. Throughout the session, Stack referred to the lesson outlines supplied during the training sessions.

Stack and White had previously played passive roles, for example, assisting in the tuckshop. This study showed that parents like Stack and White are willing, often keen, to learn a new skill; the lack of skill need not prevent parent involvement. Parents who acquire skills can provide enriched experience for children; however, parents who acquire skills need the support and presence of teachers during instruction; and, written instructions help some parents.

Training – 'Parents Instructing Parents'

This project differentiated different levels of instruction and it involved 'parents instructing parents'. The parents like Stack and White spent approximately one hour being trained in an art skill by a poet, a painter, a musician, or staff members. A school need not assume total responsibility for training parents.

After the parents had worked with the children, we realised that (i) a training session of one hour's duration is insufficient preparation for some, (ii) the training sessions were held too close to the class session; this prevented parents raising queries or recognising difficulties which might occur for them.

The Professional/Lay Distinction

The study indicated that the professional/lay distinction which categorises the teacher as 'professional' and the parent as 'lay' is too simple. While teachers are professionally trained to teach, parents with different competencies can assist. The study suggests that the 'open door' model for schools needs modifying if we want to utilise parents beyond passive roles and also beyond the active role of being a simple aide within the classroom. Our experience was that parents can become instructors, but teachers do remain in control.

Other Findings

1. Increased Involvement of Parents

At the commencement of the project, 52 percent of the families with children in Year 4 (Standard 3) chose to become involved. By the end of the project 84 percent were involved.

2. Increased Communication

Seventeen of the 25 parents interviewed after the project said they now had increased communication (in some form) with the school; 8 spoke of their increased confidence in communicating with children, 6 spoke of increased confidence within themselves; 4 considered that the way they related to children had changed.

Some parents expressed difficulty with the written questionnaire, some found they tended to think that the children understood instructions when in fact, they didn't, and the learning environment of the home proved more difficult than the school environment for some. The parents had some queries about classroom activities too.

3. Increased Social Contact

Seventeen of the parents saw greater social contact as one of the positive outcomes. Increased socialising began between parents and parents, parents and children, and, parents and teachers.

4. Parent Influence on School Arts Curriculum

While, the project provided some parents with insight into the school's art curriculum, the school gained from the parents who worked professionally within the arts. They were invited to submit suggestions for the school arts curriculum after they had worked in the classroom. Some of these provided a different artistic interpretation of the curriculum and were used in the remainder of the project.

5. Cost Saving

The cost saving came from the voluntary services provided by parents. This was in contrast to the fee charged by professionals (non-parents) who visited the school.

6. Potential for Future Parent Involvement

Twenty-four of the 25 parents interviewed advocated future parent involvement. Some parents requested the same level of involvement in future programmes. This challenged the school to encourage parents to further develop their skills in order to change their instructional roles. The majority of parents wanted the 9-year-old children's art experiences extended further. Interestingly, most parents preferred working with their own children.

7. Improved Learning

During the class sessions the children were generally receptive to the artistic activities provided by parents; some of the activities required skills which the class teacher would not have taught. The children at first found it difficult to articulate what they had learnt, but showed enjoyment and satisfaction from the new experiences. With time and experience the children began to talk about their art experience.

Notes

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This research can be found fully reported in

McGilp, E.J. *Parental Involvement in Children's Artistic Learning*, a PhD thesis held by La Trobe University, Bundoora, Victoria, Australia.

Teachers and school boards may like to pursue the ideas further through a series of cards for discussion on parent involvement available from the author, and in

1. Bastiani J. *Parents and Teachers 1*. Perspectives on home-school relations. Windsor: NFER – Nelson, 1987.
2. Braggett E.J. *Parent Involvement in Children's Education*. Newcastle: University of Newcastle, 1980.
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4. Schickedanz J.A. 'Parents, Teachers and Early Education' in *Early Childhood*. New Jersey: Avery Publishing.
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The levels of parent involvement are adapted from

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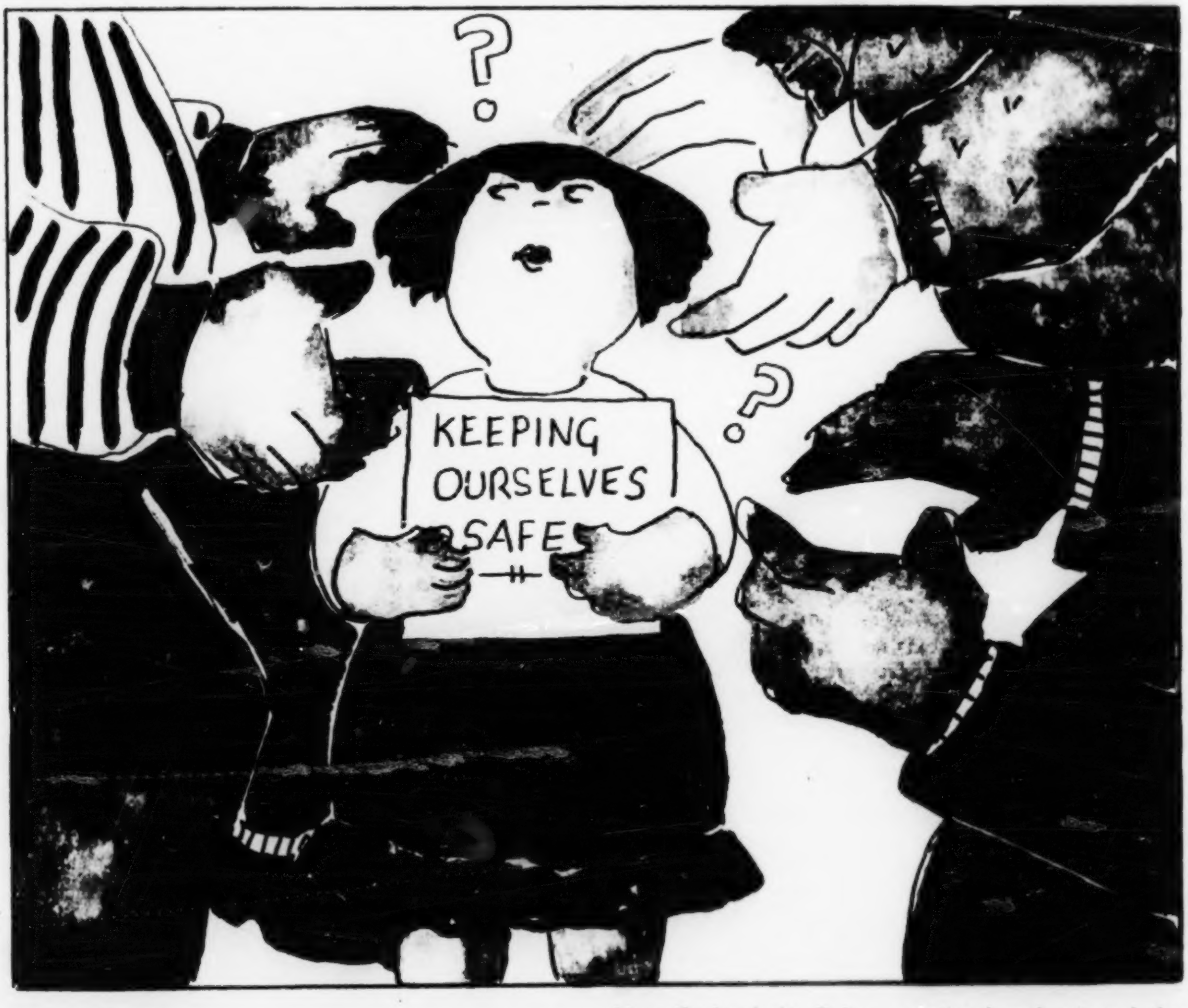
KEEPING OURSELVES SAFE

A PERSONAL SAFETY CURRICULUM EXAMINED

Freda Briggs
University of South Australia



Shona McLean

Introduction

KEEPING Ourselves Safe (KOS) is a step-by-step personal safety programme for children aged from five years to secondary school. It was developed as a result of police and teachers' concerns about the high incidence of child sexual abuse in the community and the unsuitability of the traditional 'Dangerous Stranger' information.

Personal safety programmes have been used in schools in Canada and the USA since the mid 1970's. An American program, 'Protective Behaviours', was adopted by most Australian Education Authorities in 1975. This is an empowerment model which aims to develop assertiveness in young children without referring to their sexuality. In New Zealand the Police examined and rejected the programme on the grounds that it was culturally inappropriate as well as too vague to develop the highly complex safety concepts needed by young children.

The Keeping Ourselves Safe primary school curriculum took six years to produce. It is markedly different from the earlier American/Australian programmes. It adopts an honest and open approach, accepting that sexual misbehaviour occurs and can present problems for children. Ideally, it is taught alongside other curriculum to develop self esteem and assertiveness skills.

In 1989-1990, I evaluated the Protective Behaviours programme used with children of 5 to 8 years in South Australian schools. Results were disappointing. Then in December, 1990, I evaluated KOS in primary schools in

New Zealand, in Taranaki, a rural area, and in Porirua a low SES suburb. Two hundred and fifty-eight children were interviewed. The children and the schools represented a balance of socio-economic, cultural and ability groups.

Findings

KOS works

The safest responses to all types of safety questions, including those involving sexual misbehaviour, came from children in a multi-cultural, low socio-economic school in the Porirua area. This success can be attributed to the fact that teachers had taught the programme conscientiously alongside curriculum for self esteem and assertiveness so that conflict resolution methods and respect for children's rights had become a way of life. In addition, the school had provided information sessions and involved parents throughout the programme, sending week by week messages relating to what had been taught and how parents might help.

Some of the least safe responses to all types of questions came from a 'middle-class' school where the programme had been only partially taught by teachers who assumed that middle-class children are immune from sexual molestation and do not need safety skills. These highly protected children did not believe that they could do anything to stay safe if they encountered sexual misbehaviour. They had no idea what to do if they became detached from their parents in crowded places. Their faulty, stereotyped notions of the evil, ugly, male stranger who lures children into cars ensured that they were highly vulnerable to unscrupulous but seemingly kindly adults of both sexes.

Children's concepts of safe and unsafe

Children of 5 to 6 years trust all adults implicitly. Adults are 'safe'. Five-year-olds are relatively fearless. Fears increase with age, experience and the development of imagination. In the early years however, adults are viewed as their protectors from the real dangers, i.e., being in the house alone, dealing with nightmares and fears of nighttime monsters, ghosts and bedroom shadows.

The research showed that parents are viewed as children's protectors even when those parents have already been reported for maltreating them. Even deviant parents sometimes get up in the night to comfort a crying child who is having nightmares and take their frightened children into their beds to calm them. The only children who said that they feared nothing were identified by teachers as boys who lived in very violent homes. They had adopted an 'I'm not scared of anything approach', probably as a defence mechanism to counter the harshness of their world. Alarmingly, these children were the ones who later suggested the use of extreme violence to resolve minor irritations.

As children grow older, their fears increase to include experiences such as surgical operations, hospitals, traffic accidents, earthquakes. Ten percent of children had visited a zoo. All of these children named large, caged animals and reptiles as responsible for major fears.

Conclusions and recommendations on safe and unsafe

Young children are most afraid of imaginary creatures.

They view all adults as their protectors. This makes them highly vulnerable to molestation.

The school curriculum should address children's fears, especially their fears of imaginary creatures. Information programmes should alert parents to the extent of the problem.

Children should be given the opportunity to talk about:

- their anxieties relating to being in the house alone;
- their fears of monsters under the bed and in the wardrobe;
- ghosts, shadows and noises in the night. Problem solving sessions should be provided to enable children to work out practical ways of tackling these universal anxieties.

When teachers and parents plan visits to zoos, they should ensure that the visits are educational and do not merely increase the potential for nightmares about lions, tigers, wolves and snakes.

Young children are afraid of violence

When children were asked, 'Do people ever make you feel unsafe or scared?', there were two types of response.

(1) Those who lived in violent surroundings referred only to violence.

(2) Children who had previously registered their fears of monsters and ghosts (in that order), referred to people who dress up as monsters and ghosts, particularly mentioning fears of Hallowe'en. While children enjoy dressing up, they are afraid of other people who wear sheets, costumes and masks which conceal their identities.

Other pointers: children in low socio-economic, multicultural areas often described the knife fights and domestic violence that they witnessed. From six years upwards, most children were afraid of violence in the school playground and on the route to and from school. They also referred to television violence. Ten percent of children had experienced burglaries and were afraid of intruders. Most children were afraid of their parents' uncontrolled anger and of physical punishment.

Conclusions and recommendations on fears of violence

Fears of Hallowe'en were so widespread that schools should abandon all Hallowe'en activities.

The curriculum for 5- to 8-year-olds should include problem solving activities on, 'How could somebody stay safe if grown-ups are fighting?... Suppose that it didn't work, what else could they do?'

Most parents would be shocked to know of the extent to which their children fear their arguments, anger and physical punishment. Children view all parental anger as serious because they cannot differentiate between arguments that are serious or trivial.

Domestic violence is such a common problem that parent education programmes should find ways of tackling this sensitive issue. Young children are incapable of assessing the seriousness of parents' arguments and those who lived in violent homes had already adopted violence and the use of knives as an acceptable means of meeting their needs. This suggests that conflict resolution skills should be adopted by all schools and shared with parents.

The right to reject inappropriate touching

For children to stay safe from sexual abuse, they must be able to say 'No' and escape from uncomfortable, confusing, improper and unwanted touching. To stay safe, children have to ignore all that parents and teachers have previously taught about good children being those who please and obey adults.

Regardless of their age, one-third of children revealed that, in matters of unwanted touching, their protests are ignored by both the perpetrators and their parents. Many children asserted that their pleas for adults to desist merely provide the stimulus for perpetrators to increase their unwanted activities: adults find children's protests amusing. Twenty percent of subjects already knew, from experience, that their mothers do not support them when they turn to them for help to stop unwanted wrestling, kisses, tickling, etc. They said that help is least likely to be available when complaints involve adult relatives or family friends. Complainants are accused of being 'spoil-sports, babyish', etc., when they protest.

Caring parents would be shocked to know that their young children are cynical about their willingness to protect them from other adults. 'They stick together and don't look after kids' was the common cry. Alarmingly, many children had already adopted a 'victim stance': 'What's the use of saying anything... it doesn't do any good... it might even make things worse.'

In marked contrast, when children had undertaken KOS with parent support, these matters had already been discussed in the home and children knew that their mothers would protect them.

Conclusions and recommendation on inappropriate touching

It is clearly insufficient to tell children that they have the right to reject unwanted touching: children are empowered only if adults support them. Education programmes must ensure that all parents understand the importance of respecting children's wishes relating to being touched, tickled, etc., by older siblings, relatives or family friends. This respect must, of course, include their own touching.

Children's attitudes to 'rude' behaviour and secrets involving rudeness

Children as young as five years are very conscious of 'rude behaviour'. They define 'rude' as toileting matters and the exposure of genitals, buttocks, underwear or reference to any of these. Most children volunteered the information that they had already been reprimanded or witnessed the reprimand of others for leaving the toilet with 'pants' at 'half-mast' or similar offences. Most had been reprimanded by adults for using 'rude talk'. In other words, teachers' and parents' day to day attempts to develop modesty in children had resulted in their very clear associations of rudeness with badness and punishment.

Children were aware of adults' double standards: they told interviewers that they had seen adults behave rudely in a variety of places, especially on television. They know that adults are hypocritical and the offence of rudeness is confined only to them.

Children of 5 to 8 years said that they would have to keep all rude behaviour secret (whether requested to do so or not) because rude is naughty and naughty means that 'you've done something wrong... it's your own fault... you're bad... you'll get into big trouble... grown-ups will go mad.' Unless children had been exposed to KOS with conscientious teachers, they believed that, if they encountered sexual misbehaviour, it must be their own fault. If they reported it, they would be punished twice over, first, because it had happened to them and, second, because reporting it would necessitate mentioning 'rude' things.

Children as young as five years said that they would feel guilty, responsible and blame themselves if rude behaviour happened.

At seven years, children would keep rude behaviour secret (whether asked to do so or not) because they would be embarrassed and afraid that other people might find out. They said that peers would ostracise them and belittle them with jeers such as, 'She's yukky! She must be stupid! Guess what she did!'

Sexual offenders invariably impose secrecy on their victims, threatening that terrible things will happen to them if they 'tell'. This research showed that, without safety education which tackles the secrecy problem, all children will keep all adults' secrets, especially those involving sexual misbehaviour. They believed that, if they disclosed such a secret to their mothers, their mothers would report the disclosure to the perpetrators and the victims would be punished by both.

Many children had already experienced reprimands for telling family secrets. And when police or teachers had taught children that they must only keep good surprises/secrets about Christmas and birthdays, some parents had added their own addendums to ensure that family secrets are maintained. In every case, this resulted in confusion : children suggested that they might be able to tell the good secrets that made people happy but they could never tell bad ones or family secrets for fear of trouble.

The research showed that it is comparatively easy to teach children about which secrets they should keep and tell. However, without KOS, a knowledge of their rights, and confidence in their parents, children may try to reject adults' secrets about sexual abuse. But they are unlikely to 'tell'.

It is important to note that, although teachers are involved in safety education, they are not viewed as possible children's helpers because they are perceived as having powers only within their own classrooms.

When KOS had been well taught with parent involvement, children were confident of their rights and could suggest a variety of safety strategies to escape from and report secrets involving sexual misbehaviour. In contrast to others, these children believed that if they told their mothers, they would be praised for their efforts.

Conclusions and recommendations on 'rude' behaviour

Parents often believe that their children are safe from molestation. Mothers claim that they have open family relationships and their children would inform them if they were anxious about someone's behaviour.

This research shows that, thanks to common child rearing practices, children will tell us nothing about 'rude' behaviour unless they know, from experience, that their parents (or teachers) can handle such reports without excessive emotional and punitive reactions.

The findings in this section must be incorporated in parent education programmes.

The myth of the dangerous stranger

Children who have not been involved in KOS have faulty notions of the dangerous stranger. The stranger is defined as a male, evil looking monster who is 'huge... like a bear... like a wolf... who steals things... kills kids.' As children grew older, their descriptions became more vivid, providing long lists of the horrors they commit.

These children confirmed that their interviewer (who had just flown in from Australia) was not a stranger because:

- she was female and strangers are male;
- she looked 'sort of kind... sounds nice... looks nice (like granny)'... and strangers are ugly;
- she was in school and teachers would never allow strangers to enter a school building;

- she wears reading specs (like granny) and strangers don't wear those.

Children who had not been exposed to KOS said that they had never seen a stranger but they would instantly recognise one if they saw one.

Without a programme to teach children how to select a safe stranger at times of emergency, children made outrageously dangerous suggestions for staying safe in the event of losing parents in busy, crowded places. For example, when lost in large stores, they would never approach an assistant for help because assistants would not know their names nor where they lived and, furthermore, shop assistants have to serve people and cannot leave their counters to take children home. They might, however, take them to bad strangers.

Similarly, when lost at a Christmas parade, children would not approach police or traffic officers (because they are on duty and couldn't take kids home) but they would approach Lions' Club men collecting money or 'men who sell things to kids'.

Without KOS, fears of the mythical stranger could send lost children straight into the arms of unscrupulous people who appear to be kind. And yet it is easy to take children on visits to large stores and crowded places to teach them how to approach the safest strangers for help. Rangikura School did just that, with great success. KOS children suggested long lists of safety strategies and they were able to put them in priority order.

Child molesters invariably use tricks, bribes, threats and secrecy to seduce children

Children know that their peers use tricks, bribes, threats and blackmail to make other children do things that they do not want to do. Without safety education, they do not realise that adults use the same strategies for the same purpose.

Children can be taught to recognise adults' tricks, bribes and blackmail associated with sexual misbehaviour. Those who had undertaken the KOS programme with conscientious teachers identified possible tricks and suggested sound safety strategies for handling them. Taranaki children who had not started the KOS programme but had learned about strangers' tricks from their police education officer, also provided safe answers to these questions.

The youngest children were the most susceptible to tricks. Half of all five-year-olds revealed that they would accompany any female stranger (with a car) who pretended to be collecting them from school on their mother's instructions. Comparatively few children of 5 to 7 years knew what the procedure would be if a parent was unable to collect them.

Without specific problem solving experience relating to tricks, bribes, threats and blackmail, children believed that any adult who looks kind and/or pretends to be a friend is indeed a friend and can be trusted.

One of the questions involved the offer of a reward by a baby-sitter for playing a 'new game' involving undressing. Although all children identified the game as 'rude' and 'wrong', without specific education, children said that they would have to play the game because adults are more powerful and have to be obeyed.

The least safe responses came from children in schools where KOS was taught haphazardly. When 'rude behaviour' issues had been discussed with police education officers or conscientious KOS teachers and parents, children were confident of their rights and how to proceed to stay safe.

It is important to note that some children of 5 to 7 years disclosed that they had already had to play rude, undressing games with adolescent babysitters. It is also important to note that they had not previously disclosed this information to adults for fear of punishment. One can only surmise that they confided in their interviewer because, by asking the question, the interviewer had already demonstrated that she would not be shocked by the disclosure. Unfortunately, when such information was transmitted to one school principal, he responded in the predicted, shocked, blaming manner that children most fear. Adults need their part of KOS training as much as children need theirs.

Major Conclusions

Children of 5 to 8 years are made vulnerable to sexual molestation by the very methods that we use to try to protect them from devious others. They are aware of the taboos surrounding human sexuality. They know that children are punished for being 'rude'. This ensures that they will not confide in adults about problems of a sexual nature.

Society's attempts to protect children from violent strangers have ensured that children are full of dangerous misconceptions about strangers in general. Without safety education which addresses all of these issues, they do not know how to gain help in an emergency.

Because children of 5 to 8 years are so trusting, they are vulnerable to devious adults.

KOS develops children's confidence: participants understand the limits of acceptable adult behaviour and, when programmes are accompanied by parent education, they have greater confidence in the support of their parents.

As five-year-olds are the most vulnerable, it follows that KOS should be introduced to this age group as a matter of urgency. Furthermore, because of the short retention rates of young children and the need to practice safety skills, conflict resolution and assertiveness, the programme should provide continuity of teaching throughout the first three years of school.

Parent education is vital to success. Because fathers do not normally become involved in safety education and they retain myths about sexual abuse, it is vital that schools make a special effort to attract all fathers to information sessions, if necessary providing evening sessions and creches.

Clearly, we cannot hope to protect all children. But if we fail to give them basic safety information and support, they have little hope of keeping themselves safe.

Notes

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A full report of this research is available from the author.

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Item 10

Best of set.
FAMILIES
& SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR CHRONICALLY ILL STUDENTS

with a special section on Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Dr Katherine Rowe Gwenneth Anderson
Patricia Fitzgerald Mary McLaughlin
Rhonda Higgins Tessa Brewin

Kiri Gillespie

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

THE CLINICAL PICTURE of a person who has Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) is of someone who, following a flu-like or glandular-fever-like illness (or some other viral infection) does not recover in the expected time. The excessive fatigue persists, and any minor activity causes aching muscles and arms and legs that feel like dead weights, as if the sufferer has run 5 km instead of just walking 20 metres.

Rest does not restore vitality but is unavoidable. Most troubling is the loss of ability to concentrate on tasks, to recall information quickly and to 'find the right word'. Severe persistent headaches, recurrent sore throats and enlarged lymph glands in the neck, low grade fever, abdominal pain, nausea and a feeling of unsteadiness are usually present. Pallor which persists and becomes more obvious when you try to be active is almost universal.

Rarely is depression a feature but when the illness persists for more than 6 months, feelings of frustration and being 'fed-up' are frequently present. Sleep disturbance, either difficulty falling asleep, excessive sleep or vivid dreams, are particularly disturbing for the young person and their family. Sufferers may not settle until 2 or 3 a.m. despite feeling exhausted and being in bed, then find they cannot wake at a reasonable time in the morning. Attending school is not possible, is in fact physically impossible, though many children with CFS are first thought to be 'school refusers'.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome may be suspected but is not diagnosed unless the duration exceeds 6 months. This is an arbitrary figure which is well outside the normal period of time that one would expect for recovery from influenza, glandular fever, infectious hepatitis etc., all of which may have persistent symptoms for several months. Recent advances in blood testing can rule out glandular fever in many cases.

Is it a new disease?

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome has been known by many names, each of which reflects the geographic location of the outbreak or the prevailing theory of its cause. New Zealand's outbreak in the 1980s became known as Tapanui Flu after the town that suffered most. It has been described in the medical literature since the 1880's. Most cases were sporadic but outbreaks commonly occurred associated with polio epidemics between 1930 and 1955, in Iceland, Los Angeles and Adelaide. A well known epidemic affected almost 300 staff of the Royal Free Hospital in London in 1955, with 255 requiring hospital admission. This outbreak was known as the Royal Free Disease.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) is the name used until recently, reflecting the observation that it is an illness associated with painful muscles (myalgia) and some Central Nervous System functioning, such as difficulty concentrating, retrieving information quickly and fatigue (encephalomyelitis). It has also been called 'Benign ME' meaning that it does not kill you, or 'Epidemic ME.' America has preferred the term Chronic EB Virus Infection. Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome, Post Infectious Fatigue Syndrome and Post Viral Syndrome are more names.

The name Chronic Fatigue Syndrome does not imply any particular cause and is universally accepted. However, it does provoke a superficial response – most people think they have experienced such fatigue!

Who gets it?

The majority of sufferers are in their forties, but the age range is from 8 to 60 years. An Australian study in 1990 found 40 cases per 100,000 persons with a few more women suffering than men. However, among children the ratio is three girls to each boy. Both rural and city children have been affected across all socioeconomic groups. The unfortunate term 'Yuppie flu' originating in the United States is probably because the well off sought help; it is not true that only yuppies get it. The average duration in adults is 3 years. Although many adolescents in our study have been ill for several years others have recovered completely and have remained well for the 2 years of follow up.

What can be done?

The cause of the illness is unknown, although current theories suggest that the body is failing to recognise that an original infection has been cured. There is no known treatment which will cure the illness, but many people pursue a wide variety of expensive treatments. Only one treatment has been carefully researched, and not found particularly useful. The lack of a 'magical cure' does not mean that nothing can be done. Sick students can be helped to survive in the best shape possible, until the illness gradually resolves.

Because the illness is chronic and the symptoms severe the student has, as well, major problems with educational, social, physical and emotional development. A multi-disciplinary approach is needed and the co-operation between physician and educational services is crucial if intractable problems associated with chronic illness are to be prevented. Students who are housebound, physically limited and socially isolated, miss education and, more importantly, have little exposure to normal adolescent experiences. A graduated return to school as the symptoms become less severe is ideal, but as this may not occur for many months, or even years, various strategies and resources are needed.

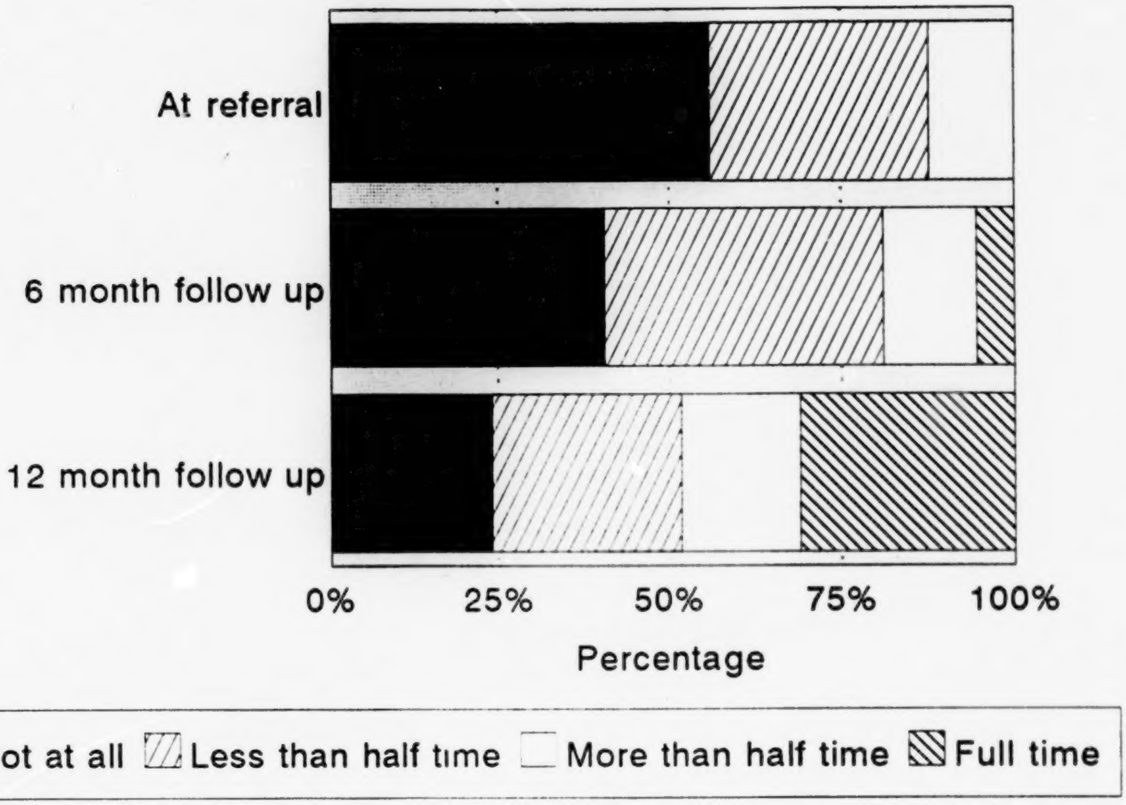
A graduated exercise programme should be begun. It should allow enough exercise to prevent muscle wasting while maintaining the maximum level of fitness possible. It must not exhaust the young person so much that recovery requires several days of bed rest. This may mean a walk to the letter box once or twice a day or a few minutes on the exercise bike, with the distance or time increased each week.

Many parents and schools were unaware of services that are available. Victoria, for example has Visiting Teachers and they have a Regional Team for Physically Disabled and Health Impaired Students. Such services facilitate contact with schools and help the return to school.

An example of how busy such a service can be is seen in figures for 3 years (February, 1989 to April, 1992). The Regional Team (Physically Disabled and Health Impaired) in the Eastern Metropolitan Region in Melbourne was asked to get Visiting Teacher support for 43 students with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. The average age was 13.1 years and male to female ratio 1:3. The students were referred as suffering various complaints at first but as the years went by the medical professional became aware of CFS and recognised it.

Figure 1

Level of school attendance at time of referral, and later



Although progress towards recovery and getting back to school is slow, it is steady. This is clearly seen in the graph (Figure 1).

A great help is for everyone to assist the student maintain a network of understanding friends, either from school or from sporting or recreational clubs. Such a network facilitates the return to school and other activities. Emotional and psychological support is also important from friends and family, even more than from professionals. It is often needed to help the pupil cope with the frustration and loss that comes with the restriction of physical activities, social contact, and reduced academic achievement. Sufferers also have to put up with ignorance of the illness common enough in such unhelpful advice as 'just pull your socks up' and taunts suggesting they are malingering.

A partnership between health and educational professionals is crucial in limiting the potentially disastrous effects. Details of how this can be done are in the next section.

Educational Strategies for Chronically Ill Students

By the time additional educational assistance is sought for students who have a chronic illness, for example CFS, they usually have had considerable interruption to their schooling. Many who are confined to bed are getting no schooling. Without help students who are housebound become increasingly isolated from peers, school, and local community and have significant social and emotional needs which are not met.

Special Provision

In Victoria the special service, Visiting Teachers for Physically Disabled and Health Impaired Students, is provided by the Department of School Education. It is a good model. Visiting Teachers provide additional educational assistance, advice and support to students, their parents, schools and school communities. They are located at School Support Centres, call in other professionals where needed, visiting students at home or at school, as required. Working together with parents, schools and medical advisers, the Visiting Teacher ensures appropriate educational programmes at home and assists the process of returning to school.

Individual Programmes

A special physical exercise and educational programme is devised when the Regional Team finds out the severity of the condition and its impact on the student. Also looked at are daily routines, what class level and what subjects the student was busy at, and who is involved both at a medical and educational management level.

Students have many features in common when referred:

- ☐ delayed academic progress because of their illness;
- ☐ increased dependence on others;
- ☐ lack of confidence and reduced self image;
- ☐ decreased organizational skills;
- ☐ unwillingness to take risks;
- ☐ inability to make decisions;
- ☐ reduced social activity which leads to reduced social and interpersonal skills;
- ☐ high expectations for achievement in all activities; (many have been high achievers at school and/or in sporting activities or the arts prior to their illness).

The negative characteristics need to be gradually overcome in order to successfully re-integrate the student into the educational and social mainstream. The process of overcoming them can be likened to the peeling of an onion – layer by layer – usually with tears. However, with appropriate support and using a team approach, a reasonable level of success can be achieved.

Any chronic illness has an effect on the capabilities and behavioural patterns of the person affected and their families. The debilitating and unpredictable nature of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is a good example. The combined effects of overwhelming fatigue, impaired concentration and information retrieval, together with headaches, muscle aches and pains and disturbed sleep patterns can present seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Visiting teachers are important in this situation, otherwise it is only the medical side of the patient's well-being that is getting attention. Visiting teachers can bring objectivity, balance and continuity of support to the situation. By gaining a knowledge and understanding of the condition through their work with these students, and by liaising with them, their parents and medical advisers, visiting teachers are able to inform schools of each individual situation. An individual management programme which re-establishes and/or maintains the links between home and school, both academically and socially, can then be put in place. It needs to be flexible, have achievable outcomes, and encourage the student to acknowledge their illness and take responsibility for their own progress. It needs to provide informed options and encourage risk taking. Flexibility, patience, persistence and perseverance are all vital ingredients for maintaining such a programme.

The educational programme should be school based as much as possible in order to re-establish links between home and school and to facilitate the ultimate return to school. In cases when there have been long absences from school, students can be enrolled with the Correspondence School or the equivalent service or they may work on a modified programme combining correspondence school lessons with aspects of their own school programme.

Where visiting teacher programmes exist they have developed strategies for care-givers, for housebound students, for those returning to school and for maintaining the integration back into school life. They are not mutually exclusive and some overlapping does not matter.

Strategies

Strategies for the care-giver

- ☐ Acknowledge the illness and the limitations that it imposes on the ability of the student to undertake academic tasks.
- ☐ Work within the parameters set by the illness.
- ☐ Emphasize the need to 'get on with life'.
- ☐ It is crucial that the student have 'ownership' of the illness – they must be included in all decision-making that relates to their routine, e.g., most students with CFS can identify a time of day when their energy levels are higher and therefore they are able to cope with more activity. This identified period may conflict with family or school routines e.g., working from 1 a.m. to 3 a.m. This is not appropriate in most households or even hospitals so the body clock must be adjusted (using professional advice) to fit family/school routines.
- ☐ Establish a daily routine as soon as possible – balance time for rest, work and recreation. It is very easy for students to spend all their 'well' time doing homework or assignments at the expense of social/recreational activities.

Housebound students

Housebound students (referred to as 'homebound' in Victoria) are those who are unable to attend school for several weeks or even several months. The strategies for management of the educational programme for housebound students are dependent upon the needs of the individual and are therefore subject to negotiation.

Prolonged isolation from their peers often results in students losing the ability to relate and interact in social situations.

It is crucial that social contact of some description be re-established for the housebound student.

- Encourage the student to initiate contact, either by telephone or letter, with school friends or sporting/recreational groups.
- Emphasize that friendship is a 'two-way interaction' - this will usually involve considerable risk-taking on the part of the isolated student – the fear of rejection is often overwhelming and requires considerable support and encouragement to 'take the first step'.
- Actively develop risk-taking strategies for situations regardless of how minor they may seem.
- If a Peer Support Programme operates at school, encourage members to phone or visit on a regular basis.
- Allow the student 'private time' – students with chronic illness are often denied time without constant adult supervision. Normal adolescents require and demand private time.
- Primary care-givers should demonstrate that they are 'getting on with their lives' by maintaining social activities and/or work commitments, e.g., the weekly tennis game should continue if possible. Avoid giving up part-time employment. If the care-giver is in full-time employment some arrangements often need to be made regarding the care and support of the student during working hours.

Getting back to school – 'one step at a time'

- Establish one 'contact person' at school – encourage all information and negotiations to be relayed through this person. e.g., a Year Co-ordinator or a Student Welfare Co-ordinator, a Dean or Counsellor. The nominated person must be sensitive to the needs of the chronically ill student.
- Prior to returning to school, if well enough to attempt some school work, allow the student to make the decision about 'what', 'how much' and 'when'.
- If absence from school has been protracted, then introducing a programme of 'reading for purpose' is a starting point; break down the task – set achievable goals, for example, to read 10 pages per day and write 1 sentence about each chapter. A tape-recorder may be used if the student experiences difficulty with handwriting or concentration.
- If the student is being seen regularly at home by the visiting teacher, it can be negotiated (when the student is starting the road back to school) that the visit occur at school, for example, in the library, instead of at home. This can then be extended with the student staying at the school for a free period following the session with the visiting teacher. The next step is for the student to remain at school during a recess or lunchtime to allow time for socialization. Gradually the time spent within the school environment can be extended until some social confidence has returned and the student is feeling comfortable in the school setting. (Using this strategy will depend on how confident the student is socially and emotionally. Some may not need such a very slow re-introduction.)
- The next step is to introduce the student to the classroom. For this to succeed, ask the student to list all subjects offered at the year (form) level in order of his or her priority. This will not necessarily be in order of academic importance as seen by teachers. Then choose a subject with which the student feels most comfortable; the teacher may be the reason for the choice. The student then attends just when the chosen subject is on.
- If the student feels capable of attempting more than one subject a realistic number should be negotiated, according to the stamina of the individual. These subjects then make up an individual programme. It is important for the student to understand that he or she must attend these classes unless the school is notified otherwise. Compulsory attendance is part of real life.
- Organising a timetable is crucial for a controlled return to school. First, the school expects attendance at the agreed times – a base for further progress. Second, it provides motivation for the student to make an effort to attend when the easier option may be to stay at home.
- A timetable helps to establish a daily and weekly routine. Success comes more easily if the student attends for specific *subjects* rather than for a predetermined *time* of the day. So, attending every morning regardless of which subject is on the timetable is less successful than attending, say, English and Physics. This system ensures continuity of subject content and gives the chance for socialization; other students quickly learn that the student attends all English classes but does not attend any music classes, for example.
- The student should be encouraged to remain at school during the recess and lunch breaks – most socializing occurs during these times. Friendship networks may have completely disintegrated during the absence period, therefore 'being seen' around the school is vital in re-establishing social links.
- Social skills may need revising, for example, how to participate in conversations, how to 'read' social situations, and how to handle negative comments from peers.
- When a chosen subject is not scheduled it is preferable that the student be given the choice of either remaining at school to rest, or of going home and returning when a subject is being taught. This choice, and an attendance register, must be negotiated with the school. Teachers should not be responsible for the transport of students to and from school.

At school – keeping going

If regular attendance has been established but the student is still absent sometimes, perhaps a couple of days or even a couple of weeks (perhaps for more treatment in hospital) the problem of 'catching up' occurs. The 'contact' person at the school should advise teachers of the absences and

ask about the possibility of 'catch-up' work, but not organise it. Manila folders (preferably of different colours) for each subject are useful so that the student, upon return to school, can approach teachers for work missed. This can then be completed at times that suit the student. **It is the student's responsibility to manage this strategy.**

Chronically ill students who have been absent from school for prolonged periods often lack initiative when they come up against 'difficult' situations. The situation may not be considered difficult by others, but it is nevertheless very real for the student. Sensitive handling is needed. The student will often appear to be coping with school in general, however 'panic syndrome' can overwhelm and jeopardize even the most carefully planned programme. Rehabilitating students may not cope well with any criticism (perceived or real), change to routine (with or without notice), and may be sensitive about instructions and/or comments from teachers or peers.

Encourage, or even insist upon, the use of a diary for social events as well as academic dates. Students with CFS, for example, are often reluctant to accept social invitations in advance because they do not know if they will be well enough on the day. Sometimes the social event itself will provide sufficient motivation for them to 'keeping going' rather than 'giving in' to the illness.

There is often a 'pay back' period following prolonged activity. Students may need to be reminded that fatigue and other symptoms, often requiring bed-rest, may persist for an unspecified period of time (ranging from a couple of days to a week or more). Students have to adjust their activities to cope with the energy level available and attempt to keep a balance between work, rest and recreation.

Allow the student to accept responsibility for their own problem solving. Ideas and options may be offered but the choice of the solution must belong to the student. Consequences of that choice must also be accepted by the student. For these strategies to succeed, the ideas and options need to be offered by a person with whom a trusting relationship has been established, for example, a visiting teacher or student welfare co-ordinator.

Normal adolescent behaviour must be taken into consideration. Mood swings, low-grade depression, anger, frustration, a need to be alone, even irrational behaviour can be part of the normal adolescent's quest for independence. In the chronically ill adolescent this 'normal' behaviour can be easily misinterpreted as part of, or as a result of, the illness. Chronic illness can accentuate normal adolescent behaviour.

As with any adolescent, goals and aspirations are important for the chronically ill student. The student with CFS or recovering from a chronic condition will often overestimate their ability to handle both the illness and the rigours of school work. Success hinges on a 'common sense management' plan for each individual student, taking into account their energy levels, their school work commitments and their recreational activities. Be realistic!

Flexibility is crucial. If plan number 1 doesn't work, regroup and formulate plan number 2. And so on! Management plans must be reviewed regularly.

Keeping going

☐ Encourage the student to plan ahead

☐ Encourage the use of a diary for social events as well as academic dates.

☐ There is often a 'pay back' period involved with social events. For example, if the ill student desperately wants to attend a particular rock concert they must realise that feeling unwell for an unspecified period of time afterwards will have to be endured. The pay back time could be as long as a week. The motto *Spend Energy Now – Pay Later* applies.

☐ Emphasize that educational opportunities are much broader now than in the past. There is greater educational flexibility now through
- non-university tertiary education: TAFE in Australia, Technical Institutes in NZ.
- part-time courses in almost every institution,
- Community education,
- VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education – Victoria only),
- adult admission to secondary schools.

☐ Establish support groups
- at school: usually the staff who are responsible for the student's programme;
- amongst sufferers: there is one in Melbourne called STUFFED (Suffering Teenagers Unit to Fight Fatigue and End Depression);
- among parents: such a group is the ME/CFS Society Parent Support Group.

Such groups do not need to be large, formal, with constitutions, incorporated, etc., but they are a great help to everyone involved. A grouping loosely attached to a particular hospital is often best, with parents all just a local telephone call away.

Notes

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Tessa Brewin is a Trial Co-ordinator, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Study, Royal Children's Hospital, Parkville.

The Australian study of CFS which is quoted is

Lloyd, A.R., Hickie, I., Boughton, C.R., Spencer, O., Wakefield, D. (1990) Prevalence of chronic fatigue syndrome in an Australian population, *Med. J. Aust.*, Vol. 153, pp. 522-8.

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IS MORE OF THE SAME BETTER?

Studies of Grade Repetition and its effects at primary level

Dianna Kenny
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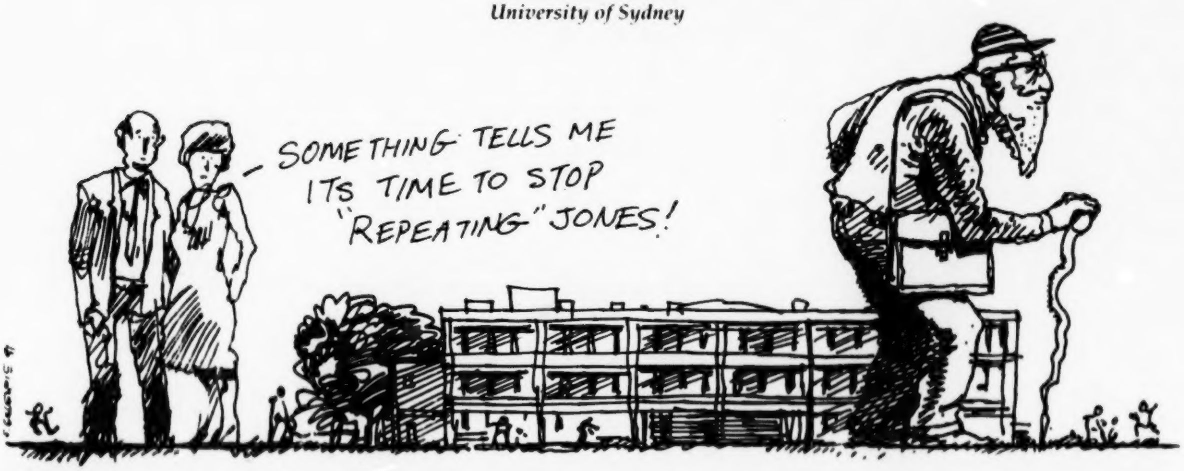

SOMETHING TELLS ME ITS TIME TO STOP "REPEATING" JONES!

'SHOULD MY CHILD repeat the year?' Many an anxious parent asks the teacher or principal this question. Working as a district school counsellor in rural schools I was surprised to find that most people believed repeating *would* help. In Australia and New Zealand there is concern that repeated children arrive at school-leaving age a year behind the rest and in New Zealand many of them leave without attempting any School Certificate subjects.

I knew that there was next to no research on the matter, certainly in Australia. I became even more concerned when I saw the unsystematic way decisions were made to repeat a child. I did a quick local investigation and found in one school that 30% of the children had repeated a year, in another only 4%. Five full-scale experimental studies later we now have a clearer view. The questions asked and answered are

Study 1. Who is repeated? a head counting exercise.
Study 2. Why are they repeated? a questionnaire project.
Study 3. Who benefits from repeating?
Study 4. What are the effects, academic and socio-emotional, of repeating?
Study 5. Are there long term benefits? a look at repeaters several years later.

Study 1. Who is repeated?

I made a sample survey in 1982, and in March 1983 the NSW Education Department surveyed all its schools. It reported as in Table 1.

My own survey had come up with figures only slightly different. The major findings, putting the two surveys together, were:

i) Boys were repeated more often than girls in an approximate ratio of 3:2.

ii) Rural boys were repeated at twice the rate of urban boys and rural girls were repeated 1.5 times more often than urban boys.

iii) Year 1 is the most often selected grade for repetition (5.5%) followed by grade 2 (3%) and grade 3 (1.5%).

iv) The most commonly encountered profile of a repeated student is that of a boy, in first grade, living in a rural region of NSW. In 1982, 10% of rural year 1 boys were repeated compared to 5.5% of urban year 1 boys and 7% of rural year 1 girls.

v) The overall estimate of 14.5% - 17.48% represents a continuing trend toward a decrease in repetition.

Table 1
Repetition Rates in NSW Schools, March 1983
Percentages

Males	Females	Kindergarten (5/6-year-olds)	Year 1	Year 2	Years 3, 4, 5, 6	Urban	Rural
2.5	1.8	1.2 – 1.5	5.5	3.0	1.2 – 1.5	12.6	19.6

NSW Education Department

Australian policy once favoured repetition in Year 6, but changed its recommendation in 1980 suggesting that

> "... an ongoing policy of pupil appraisal and age/year adjustment should ensure that pupils are repeated earlier and more appropriately as their learning difficulties and/or social maladjustments become apparent." (*The Transition of Primary Pupils to Secondary School*, 1980)

Study 2. Why are students repeated?

Principals and teachers from the 148 schools who participated in my sampling study were asked to list the factors that they considered to be important in the decision to repeat children. Their ideas, together with reasons for repetition cited in the literature, formed the basis of the questionnaire I used in this study. This questionnaire went to another selection of schools and they completed individual questionnaires on all their currently repeated students. In all, 419 usable replies came back.

Table 2

Why children were repeated.

The Sixteen Variables from the *Reasons for Repetition Questionnaire* Rank Ordered According to the Frequency of Selection

Variable	Number of Selections	Percentage
1. Young	285	68.0*
2. Immature	241	57.5
3. Average Ability with Poor Achievement	158	37.7
4. Emotional problems	117	27.9
5. Behaviour problems	115	27.4
6. Reading problems	113	27.0
7. Maths problems	100	23.9
8. Parental request	98	23.4
9. Home problems	49	11.7
10. Bright with poor achievement	48	11.5
11. Poor attendance	26	6.2
12. Frequent change of school	22	5.3
13. Physically handicapped	21	5.0
14. Migrant with poor English	13	3.1
15. Mentally handicapped	12	2.9
16. Aborigine	3	0.7

* Note: Percentages do not total 100 as this is multiple response data.

Perhaps a better way to look at the children who were repeated is to look at the major reason given for each child, and then at the other characteristics these children had. This gives us four main groups, those repeated because they were young, those repeated because they had average ability but were poor achievers, those who had special learning problems and those considered immature. Their other characteristics are listed in the lower part of Table 3.

These four groups could not have been identified by looking at the father's occupational status, the number of children in the family, the child's position in the family nor the children's IQ scores.

While immaturity as a main reason accounted for only 13 percent of repetitions, children in each of the other three groups were also considered immature. Parents play an important role in the decision to repeat and teachers identified parental requests as an important determining factor. Parents expressed most concern for students with specific learning problems. Poor achievement (in the absence of a clear cut reason such as low IQ scores or specific learning disability) accounted for 33% of the reasons for repetition.

Study 3. Who Benefits from Repetition?

A lot of children repeat grades in NSW schools. Do they all benefit? Are there some who should not have been repeated? Is there a good way of selecting those who will benefit most by repeating? In this study, starting from pupil record cards (PRC) I looked at (i) the reasons for which students are repeated, (ii) their sex, (iii) the IQ score on the cards, and (iv) which grade they repeated.

I looked at 132 children from 22 schools. For three I was unable to discover why they had been repeated but the rest were repeated because they were:

(a) young,
(b) immature (including emotional and behavioural problems), or
(c) had poor academic records.

They were all children who had been repeated 'late' in Years 3 to 6. The reason for selecting this group was mainly because the record cards do not give enough information about children repeated earlier.

Analysis and statistical matching gave these results:

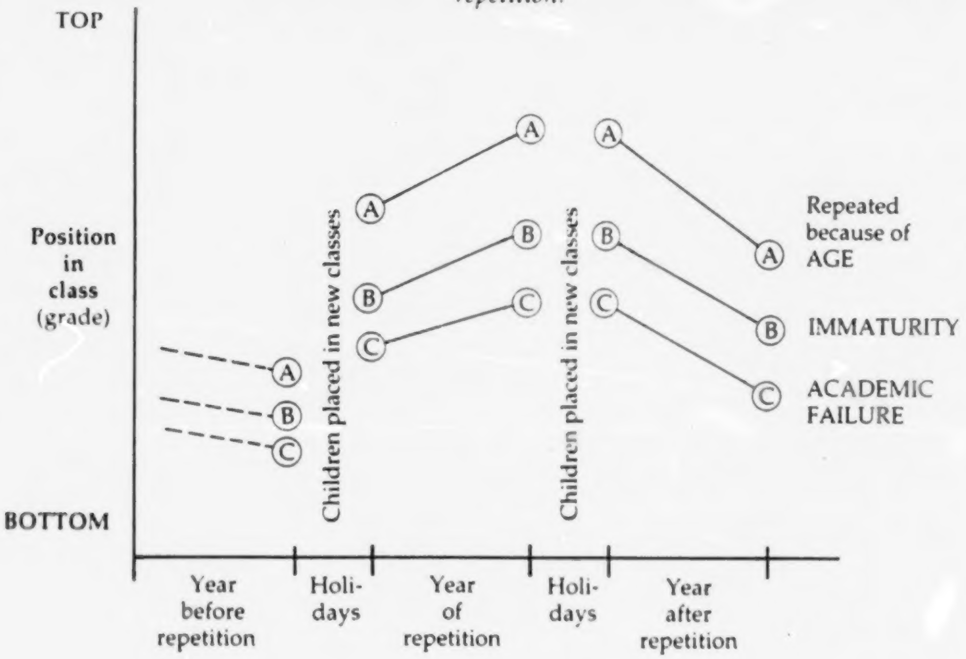
The children who were repeated primarily because they were young (group a) had significantly higher IQ scores than those repeated because of immaturity (group b, immaturity as distinct from age) or academic difficulties (group c).

Table 3

Major Groups of Repeaters

Reason for Repeating	I Young (35%)	II Average Ability with Poor Achievement (33%)	III Special Learning Problems (20%)	IV Immature (13%)
Other Characteristics			Reading	Bright with poor achievement
			Maths	
		Young	Young	
	Immature	Immature	Emotional problems	Emotional problems
		Behaviour problems	Behaviour problems	Behaviour problems
		Parental request for repetition	Parental request for repetition	

Three typical repeated children.
Their place in class (grade) and the reason for their repetition.



Checking at year-ends, for all three groups, the place in grade improves in the year of repetition and deteriorates in the year following repetition, but not to the level before .

For all three groups, the place in grade **improves** in the year of repetition and **deteriorates** in the year following repetition, but not to the level before.

This can be seen in Diagram 1 (above) which does not give exact figures, merely the trends.

So, as we would expect, a child repeating a class does better in that class, but the next year, when the work is all new, that child does not do quite so well. Children repeated because of their age, improve more in the repeated class than the others, but the gains are what you would expect – they started higher up the class. Repeating does not help one group more than another.

But these averages do not show the full picture. Some children do not show an improvement at all, either in the year of repetition or in the year following repetition. Twelve of my 132 were in a worse position after repeating. A total of 68 students showed either a minimal improvement (of less than 25 percentiles), no change, or a deteriorating performance in the year they repeated. In the year after repeating 43 students showed either a minimal improvement, no change in position or a deteriorating performance. The remaining 14 students improved by 25 percentiles or more in the year after repetition.

Seven children improved their percentile ranking by 50 in the year of repetition. These children all had IQ scores between 107-114. The 12 children whose performance deteriorated had IQ scores between 78 and 112. The 37 students with improved percentile ranking of between 16-50 also had a wide range of I.Q. (85-109). Interestingly, in the year after repeating, those students who improved the most, and those who showed no improvement, had the highest IQ scores.

Neither the grade in which the child repeated nor the reason for which he or she was repeated had any effect on the level of improvement.

Discussion

These results are all rather negative : neither the reason for repetition, the children's sex, their IQ score, their place in class (before repetition) nor the grade repeated, are useful in predicting the outcome of repetition. Each group showed improvement during the year of repetition and regression in the year following repetition. No major differences were found between students who improved most and those who improved least. These results contrast with a widely held view that repetition has a beneficial effect on the academic performance of immature students, while proving of no value to children of low intelligence and with behavioural disturbance. A striking feature was the very large differences in the places in grade before, during and after repetition and in the IQ scores for the different groups. These repeaters display a much wider fluctuation in performance than one would expect of normally progressing students. Clearly each child must be treated as a special case and great care taken in working out whether to repeat or to allow the child to progress to the next grade.

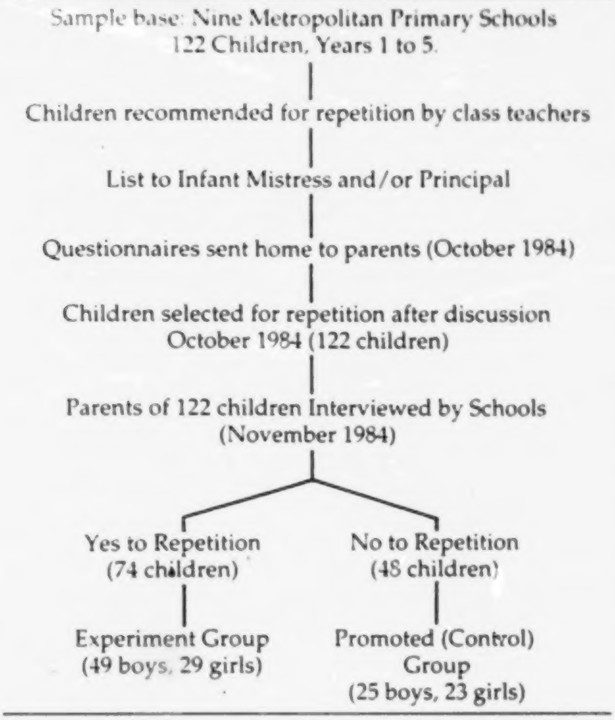
The results of this study suggest (along with other studies) that repetition can benefit only a minority of students. My criterion of success was an improvement of 25 or more percentile rankings. Only forty percent of repeated students managed that in the year of repetition; only 30 percent achieved the criterion in the year following. Other studies report improvement as low as 20-35 percent.

Why is repeating a class so unsuccessful? Perhaps the wrong students are being selected to repeat?

Study 4. What are the academic and social/emotional effects of repetition?

In October 1984, nine schools in Sydney were asked to provide lists of students who were being considered for repetition in 1985. The policy of the New South Wales Education Department is that the school can make recommendations to parents who then make the final decision.

Diagram 2
Selection Procedures


Sample base: Nine Metropolitan Primary Schools
122 Children, Years 1 to 5.
Children recommended for repetition by class teachers
List to Infant Mistress and/or Principal
Questionnaires sent home to parents (October 1984)
Children selected for repetition after discussion
October 1984 (122 children)
Parents of 122 children Interviewed by Schools
(November 1984)
Yes to Repetition
(74 children)
No to Repetition
(48 children)
Experiment Group
(49 boys, 29 girls)
Promoted (Control) Group
(25 boys, 23 girls)

Subjects
There were 122 children in the study, of which 74 were repeated.

The parents of the other 48 children rejected the schools' recommendations and requested that their children proceed to the next grade in 1985. This group represents the closest approximation to a control group achievable in a naturalistic setting.

Measuring was thorough. There were objective measures of intellectual functioning, normative and school based tests in reading and mathematics, assigned place in grade, and sociometry. These were complemented by subjective assessments by teachers, parents and students of students' academic performance and social/emotional adjustment, using specially constructed scales and questionnaires. Repeated and promoted students were pre- and post-tested on all measures (except IQ) in October, 1984 and October, 1985.

Results
In October 1984 there were no major differences between the two groups. Teachers also rated the two groups as similar, expressing equal concern for their poor academic achievement and emotional immaturity. But the parents who agreed to repeat their children, rated their children's academic performance to be worse than parents who wanted their children to proceed to the next grade. The children were reassessed exactly one year later.

The repeating children improved their place in class – up 27 percentiles. The promoted children stayed pretty much where they had been. But doing better in a repeated class did not mean greater acquisition of academic material. Repeated and promoted groups improved at similar rates in word knowledge and reading age, in comprehension and the Schonell tests of reading and spelling. However, repeated students did better on the maths test, improving by 30% compared to 21% for the promoted group.

Teachers perceived significant improvements in repeated students' academic performance, emotional maturity, social adjustment and physical development while parents reported improvements in achievement and attitude towards school. Children themselves did not report any differences. The tests of peer acceptance showed repeated children were better accepted than before, while promoted students showed no change. Teachers and parents perceived positive changes in repeated but not promoted students. Repeated children felt they had had more academic success but promoted children did not.

When the performance of repeated students is compared with that of a group of closely matched promoted students, the academic gains are the same. Despite these equal academic outcomes, teachers, and the children themselves, perceived repetition somewhat more positively.

Study 5. Are there long term benefits from repeating a class?

Study 3 showed primary repeaters improving during the year but deteriorating in the year following, although not to pre-repetition levels. Does this trend continue or does academic performance stabilise? What happens over time? In 1988 I was able to re-test 44 of the children in study 4 three years after they had last seen me. Twenty-six were from the group that repeated a year in 1985, and 18 had been promoted that year.

Twenty-seven had birthdays in April, May, June or July. These students had been the youngest in their grades prior to repetition. Throughout NSW 30% of such children were selected for repetition compared with 10% of children with birthdays between August and March. Birthdate is therefore an important factor to consider. Fourteen students, of whom 9 were repeaters, had IQ scores less than 90.

I again used an IQ test (WISC-R) and tested word knowledge, comprehension and mathematics. Each student's place in grade (based on the school's assessment of performance in reading, language, mathematics and spelling) was provided by the schools.

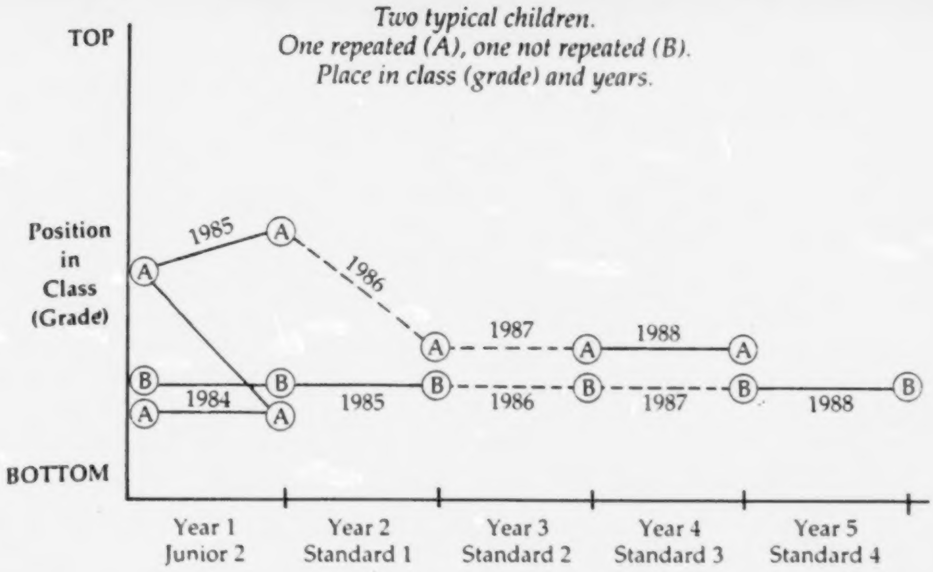
Results
There were no differences in academic performance based on sex, birthdate, repetition or year of repetition. However, students with IQ scores greater than 90 achieved better results than students with IQ scores of less than 90. Both repeated and promoted groups had improved in mathematics, reading and comprehension over the five years. The generalised diagram of the situation (Diagram 3) shows the trend, but no details.

Conclusions
Repeating students improved their place in class in the year of repetition and retained some of the benefit of the three year follow-up. Promoted children stayed at much the same place in class over the five years. Both repeated and promoted students were performing at a similar standard three years after the first assessment. This suggests that although repeating is not of great use, at least the small gains made in the year of repetition are not lost over time.

The similarities in performance between repeated and promoted groups over time suggest that student characteristics are more important than the experience of repetition for short and long term changes in academic performance.

There was no difference between 'young' repeaters (April to July birthdays) and 'old' repeaters (August to March birthdays).

From the follow-up data, it did not seem to matter to place-in-class whether a child had been repeated or not; the factor that made the difference, for this sample of children, was the child's IQ score. However, it is important to



remember that the IQ score is not the only factor that could influence the long term outcome. We saw in the previous study that the children's IQ score was not a predictor of the results that repetition would bring in the year after repeating.

Summary

The chronological age of students is a critical factor in the decision to repeat in NSW schools. The Departmental study conducted in 1983 showed that students with May, June or July birthdays have a one in three chance of repeating a grade compared to a one in twenty chance for children born in August, September and October. The birthdate effect is exacerbated by sex and regional factors, with rural boys most at risk of repetition. There is little empirical support for May to July children benefitting from grade repetition. Mental rather than chronological age is a better predictor of academic achievement. Just giving children 'an extra year to catch up' without varying either the content or presentation of the curriculum has resulted in unpredictable (but generally minimal) improvements in the academic achievement of repeated students. This applies not only to chronologically young students, but also to those with specific learning disabilities and emotional and behavioural problems.

I would argue that the observed improvements in Year 1 children who repeat Year 1, usually attributed to repetition, are in fact due to spontaneously occurring maturational processes. There are also 'frame of reference effects' teachers view repeated students more positively because they are comparing them against a younger peer group.

Although there do appear to be gains in the social/emotional adjustment of repeated students, these were children given no special programmes. Programmes which focus on improving behaviour and academic output simultaneously produce decreased disruptive behaviour and enhanced self-concept. Rigorous programming and individualised instruction offer more cost-effective means of enhancing social/emotional adjustment.

When asking if any particular child should be promoted or should repeat a class a wide range of variables, including the child's 'stage' of development, emotional adjustment, motivation and anxiety about learning all need to be investigated in detail. On the other hand, the content, pacing and presentation of curricula are also of critical importance. Inadequacies in these areas have often been neglected. Careful task analysis, sequencing, practice and reinforcement of academic material is a prerequisite to effective learning. More research on what sort of additional assistance young immature children, and those with specific difficulties, need will help teachers and parents immensely. Meanwhile it appears that repetition and promotion offer similar academic outcomes in primary school. The effects much further down the track, for example, at school-leaving age, have not been attempted in this *set* item.

Notes

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The full report of research reported here is found in

Kenny, D.T. (1987) Grade Repetition in NSW Government Primary Schools: An Evaluation of Frequency, Patterns and Outcomes, Macquarie University, Doctoral Dissertation.

See also

Kenny, D. (1989) The effect of grade repetition on the academic performance and social/emotional adjustment of infants and primary students. In *Psychological Development: Perspectives Across the Life-Span*, M.A. Luszcz and T. Nettelbeck (Eds.), North-Holland: Elsevier Science Publisher B.V.

and

Kenny, D. (1989) Grade repetition: A three year follow up. *Australian Journal of Remedial Education*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 7-11.

For the full data and the statistical methods those who are interested are referred to the papers above.

In New Zealand there has been analysis of official figures on repetition by Dr Geraldine McDonald of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, and articles published in ***set***. See

McDonald, Geraldine, 'Promotion, Retention and Acceleration', ***set*** No. 2, 1988, item 3.

Research in the USA has also been published in ***set***.

Smith, Mary Lee and Shepard, Lorrie, A., 'What Doesn't Work: Explaining Policies of Retention in the Early Grades', ***set*** No. 2, 1988, item 2.

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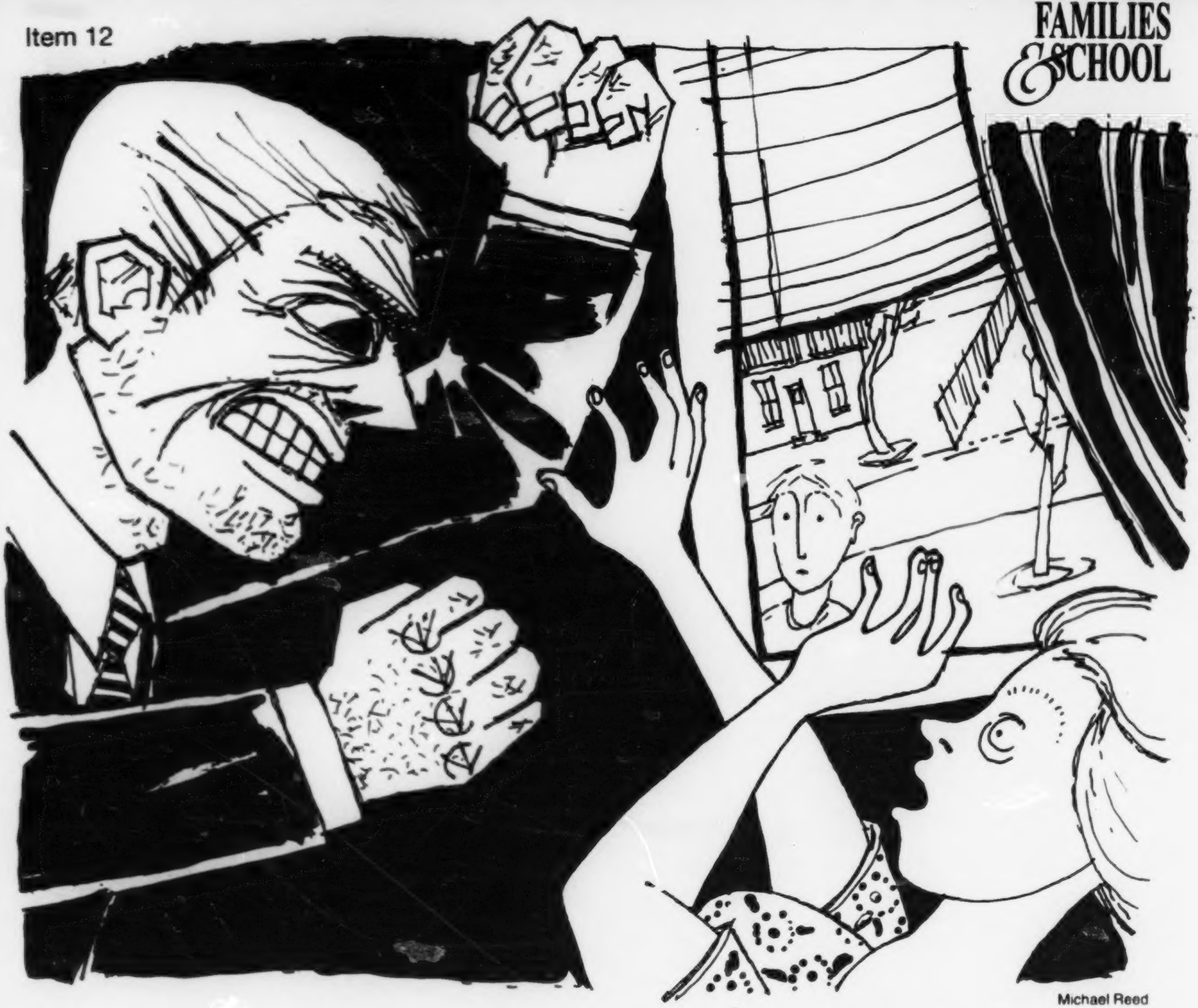

Michael Reed

Family Violence

Its Effects on Children and Schools

By John Church
University of Canterbury

Aggressive and unmanageable children pose one of the more difficult of the problems faced by the classroom teacher. Overseas research suggests that there are two factors which more than anything else predict the development of behaviour problems in children. These factors are (a) high levels of discord between parents, and (b) harsh and punitive treatment of the child by its parents.

A New Zealand Study

The same kind of link has been observed in a recently completed New Zealand study. The study explored the experiences of a sample of 101 abused wives. All of the women in the sample were women who, because of the degree of abuse which they had experienced, had developed a fear of their husbands. The sample consisted of all of the frightened women who contacted a telephone counselling service for battered women during the first 10 months of 1982 and who agreed to be interviewed a year later – 101 out of 145 women. Between them, these women provided information on the development of 228 children, many of whom had also been abused.

At the point when they were interviewed, 75 of the women in the sample had separated and 26 were still living with their abusive husbands. The relationships described by these women had lasted from less than one year (4 cases) to more than 34 years (3 cases). The median duration of the relationships of the separated women was 9 years 7 months.

The women described relationships in which a failure to comply with their husband's demands resulted in verbal abuse, threats, physical assaults, or sexual assaults. All but one of the women in the sample had been hit, all but five had been beaten and injured, and 67 per cent reported one or more beatings which were so bad that they began to wonder if they would even survive. Sixty-two per cent of the women said that their husbands had threatened to kill them on more than one occasion, and 20 per cent had been threatened with a firearm.

The occupational levels of the husbands were distributed in approximately the same way as they are for employed men in general. The same was true of the husbands' incomes. The frequency and severity of the assaults reported by the wives were unrelated to the occupational level, income level, educational level, or drinking habits of the husbands.

Treatment of the children during the marriage

The mothers in the sample were asked three questions about the way in which their children had been treated. The first was 'Did you ever have to stand in front of the children to prevent them from being assaulted?' The answer to this question was 'Yes' for exactly half (114) of the children. These reports were significantly related to the age of the child with respondents reporting greater frequencies of intervention with teenage children than with pre-teenage children.

The second question was 'Were any of the children ever seriously assaulted by their father?' The answer to this question was 'Yes' for 67 (29%) of the children in the sample. This figure is similar to that in several other studies. Of the women passing through New Zealand refuges over a three month period, 26 per cent reported that their husband had physically abused the children on one or more occasions. Physical or sexual abuse of children was identified in one-third of the violent families studied by Hilberman and Munson in 1978.

The third question was 'Were any of the children ever sexually molested?' The answer to this question was 'Yes' for 18 (8%) of the children. All but one of the women who reported sexual molestation of the children left their husbands before the children reached adolescence.

Each mother was also asked (a) how frightened each child had become, (b) how nervous and withdrawn each child had become, and (c) how demanding and unmanageable each child had become by the end of the marriage (or, in the case of older children, by age 14). To get some idea of the way in which the children were being affected by the violence, a detailed analysis was made of the mothers' reports for those children who were aged between 4 years and 15 years at the date of separation (or, in the case of intact families, at the date of interview). There were 137 children in this subgroup.

Of these children, 105 (77%) were reported to be frightened of their fathers. These reports were unrelated to the age or the gender of the child – with closely similar proportions of boys and of girls being described as frightened at each age level.

Of the children in this subgroup, 89 (65%) were described as having become nervous and withdrawn. These reports were also unrelated to the age and gender of the child.

Sixty-three (46%) of the children in this subgroup were described by their mothers as having become demanding and unmanageable and this proportion did not vary with the age of the child. However, a greater proportion of boys than of girls were classified as demanding and unmanageable at each age level. These differences were greatest at the 9- to 12-year-old level where 60 per cent of the boys but only 29 per cent of the girls were described as demanding and unmanageable.

The mothers' classification of their children as frightened, withdrawn, or unmanageable was unrelated to whether or not the child had been physically or sexually abused. The variables which were most strongly related to the classfication of these children as frightened or not frightened were (a) the frequency with which the mother had been assaulted (r = .51) and (b) the frequency with which the mother had been injured (r = .50). These two variables were also related to whether or not the child was classified as withdrawn and whether or not the child was classified as unmanageable.

Children of the parents who stayed together

Forty-six of the children in the sample were aged 16 years or more at the time of separation or, in the case of non-separated women, at the time of interview. Of these, 41 had been exposed to violent conflict from the first few years of life and these 41 children became an 'older children' subgroup for the following analysis.

Where the interview identified a child over 16 years of age, the mother was asked whether or not she was happy with the way in which the child had turned out and, if she was not, she was asked to elaborate on what it was about the child which was giving her cause for concern. These comments were then coded to identify any over 16-year-olds who appeared, on the basis of the mother's description, to be moderately or seriously disturbed. Children over 16 years of age were classified as 'disturbed' if the mother's comments indicated that the child was severely withdrawn, uncommunicative, subject to regular outbursts of temper, demanding or abusive or aggressive 'like dad', or was known to have assaulted any other person.

This analysis identified 24 (59%) of the 41 older children as moderately or seriously disturbed. Thirteen (77%) of the boys were so classified and 11 (46%) of the girls. This incidence is similar to that observed in other studies involving larger samples. For example, Michael Rutter in 1971 in Britain reported that the proportion of children with conduct disorders in families where there is a high degree of discord between the parents varies from 40 per cent to 60 per cent of children depending upon the other factors which are also present. In the present survey, boys were more seriously affected than girls and this too has been reported by previous studies, for example, in Rutter's study.

When the 41 children in the older children subgroup were classified as disturbed or not disturbed, this classification was found to be significantly related to many of the measures of coercion which had already been reported by the wife. Women who reported high frequencies of verbal abuse within their marriages more often described their older children as disturbed than did women who reported lower frequencies of verbal abuse (r = .57). Women who reported that they were frequently assaulted more often described their older children as disturbed than did women who were less frequently assaulted (r = .51). The same relationship was found between the frequency with which the wife was injured and the classification of older children as disturbed (r = .54).

The socio-economic status of the father's occupation was negatively related to the classification of older children as disturbed. Where the father's occupation was classified as Level 1 or Level 2 (professional and semi-professional) a much higher proportion of the older children were classified as disturbed than was the case where the father's occupation was classified as Level 5 or Level 6 (unskilled). These results suggest that when the marriages of the well educated and occupationally successful couples deteriorated into verbal and physical abuse, the effects on the children were more severe than was the case with the less occupationally 'successful' parents.

In the families where the wife described her husband as extremely immature, chauvinistic, or possessive, more than three quarters of the children were classified as disturbed whereas in the families where the wife described her husband as only moderately immature, chauvinistic, or possessive only 25 per cent of the older children were classified as disturbed.

Physical abuse of the child by the father was not related to subsequent classification as disturbed. The children who had been assaulted by their fathers were no more likely to be classified as disturbed than were the children who had not been assaulted by their fathers.

Effects of parental separation on the children

The effects of parental separation were measured by analysing the information available on the children whose parents had separated prior to the interview, and who were aged between 6 and 12 years at the date of separation and who had been exposed to violent conflict from the first years of life. There were 51 children in this subgroup. At the point when their parents separated, 44 (86%) of these children were frightened of their fathers, 38 (75%) were described as nervous and withdrawn, and 22 (43%) were described by their mothers as demanding and unmanageable.

Of the children who were frightened of their father, 41 per cent were described as having become less frightened following the separation. Of the children who had become nervous and withdrawn, 89 per cent were described as having become less nervous and withdrawn following the separation. Of the children who were described as unmanageable, 77 per cent were reported to have improved following separation.

Improvements in the children were related to a number of post-separation events. The speed with which the children recovered from the effects of the marriage depended upon whether or not the violent parent pursued a custody application, whether or not the violent parent insisted on regular access visits regardless of the wishes of the child, and whether or not access, once obtained, was used as a vehicle for continued harassment of the wife. Mothers who were granted a non-molestation order, or occupation of the family home more often reported their children as improved than did mothers who did not achieve these things. Children who were required, against their wishes, to go on regular access visits with their fathers and children who became caught up in custody disputes tended not to improve and, in a number of cases, became more frightened, or more unmanageable.

Following separation, the father applied for custody of 47 of the children in the sample and the applications regarding 41 of these children had been heard prior to the interview. The results of the initial hearings were that the Court directed 21 (51%) of these children to live with their mothers, 17 (41%) of the children to live with their fathers, and 3 (7%) to live week and week about with each parent. Seven of these children had been sexually molested by their fathers and the Court initially gave the father either custody or shared custody of all seven of these children. Following the making of these initial orders there were a number of rehearings and appeals. As a result, seven of the children who were initially directed to live with their fathers returned to live with their mothers, and one of the shared custody children was directed to live solely with its father.

Conclusions

Studies in the USA have suggested that people who have been abused as children are more likely to be violent towards their own spouse and children. This link was not found in the present study. First, no relationship was found between whether or not the child had been abused, and the psychological development of the child. Secondly, the violent husbands who had been abused as children were not more frequently violent towards their wives than the husbands who had not been abused as children.

The study did, however, find the previously reported link between parental discord and behavioural disorders in later life. Of the children who had spent the first 16 years of their life in a violent home, nearly 60 per cent were classified as disturbed or violent. Nearly 60 per cent of the husbands in the present sample had been raised by violent fathers, and the husbands from violent homes were more frequently violent towards their wives than the husbands who had been raised in non-violent homes.

This suggests that it is not the abuse of the child per se which has the most detrimental effects on the development of the child (at least in these marriages). Rather, the results suggest that it is the abuse of one parent by the other which affects the child most adversely. The results of the present study are consistent with the conclusions drawn by Michael Rutter more than 10 years ago:

> Studies of unbroken families show that boys in homes where there is an unhappy marriage between the parents are much more likely to become deviant than are boys in harmonious homes. Both active discord and lack of affection are associated with the development of anti-social disorders... The longer the family discord lasts, the greater the effect on the child (Rutter, 1971, p. 254).

Although only a minority of the children in the families surveyed were themselves assaulted, a majority began to develop a fear of the violent parent and a significant proportion began to develop symptoms of emotional disturbance (namely nervousness, withdrawal, and acting out behaviour). The data obtained on the children whose parents had separated suggested that, in the majority of cases, the children became less frightened, less withdrawn, and less unmanageable following departure of the violent parent from the home.

Implications for Teachers

These results have a number of implications for teachers.

First, teachers have a responsibility to teach all children that violent behaviour is unacceptable in the society outside the home. This means that teachers should respond firmly to coercive and aggressive behaviour in children, rather than attempt to 'compensate' for a harsh home life by being more tolerant and more lenient at school. In other words, teachers should be strict in not giving in to the tantrums of conduct-disordered children and should never allow such children to get their own way or to be reinforced for aggression within the school. Unless this lesson is learned at school, the chances are high that the children from violent families will grow up to repeat the behaviour patterns of their parents.

Secondly, teachers need to be aware that in families where one parent is violent, the chances of child abuse are very high. Since only child abuse which is detected can be reported, it follows that teachers need to be aware of which of their children are growing up in violent homes, they need to keep a watch for signs of child abuse in these cases, and they need to be prepared to report instances of child abuse to someone who has the power to intervene authoritatively. In most areas this will be either the Police, or the Department of Social Welfare or its equivalent. But in areas where a 'Child Protection Team' has been established, reports of child abuse may be made to this team.

Thirdly, teachers need to appreciate that women who are being beaten by their husbands are often looking for a way out of the violent relationship. Because the children are also affected by the violence, the teacher will often be the first to discover that there is violence at home. While most teachers will not want to intervene directly in such families, they should at least point out to the abused wife that her problem is recognised and that there are places where one can go for help. Most towns now have either a refuge or a support group for battered wives and a referral to this source of advice and support will be appropriate in almost all cases of wife abuse.

Finally, New Zealand teachers need to be aware that recent changes in the Family Law have made it much easier for fathers to get custody of their children and that this seems to have resulted in some violent fathers being given custody. Because teachers have a large amount of ongoing contact with the children of these marriages, they are often well placed to make an important contribution to the Court's decision in custody disputes. If, for example, the behaviour of a child improves following separation from a violent parent, then this is important information. It should not be withheld from the Court. It should be made available. In these cases, the most appropriate person to get in touch with will usually be the solicitor who has been appointed to act for the child.

Notes

John Church is Senior Lecturer in Education at Canterbury University, Christchurch 1.

An example of overseas research suggesting that (a) high levels of discord between parents and (b) harsh treatment of the child by its parents predict the development of behaviour problems can be found in

Rutter, M.L. Parent-child separation. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 1971, 12, pp. 233-260.

A recently completed New Zealand study showing the same link is

Church, R.J. *Violence Against Wives: Its Causes and Effects.* Christchurch: Battered Women's Support Group (P.O. Box 5227, Christchurch), 1984.

Another study of whether children were seriously assaulted by their fathers (second question) is

Synergy Applied Research Ltd. *A Socio-economic Assessment of New Zealand Women's Refuges.* Wellington: Synergy Applied Research Ltd, 1983.

Physical and sexual abuse of children in one third of violent families is reported in

Hilberman, E. and Munson, K. Sixty battered women. *Victimology: An International Journal*, 1977-78, 2, pp. 460-471.

Studies in the USA suggesting that people who had violent parents become violent parents can be read about in

Straus, M.A., Gelles, R.J. and Steinmetz, S.K. *Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family.* New York: Anchor Books, 1980.

The other references to, and the quotation from, Michael Rutter can be found in his article mentioned above.

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Pause Prompt Praise:

Seventeen Years On

Ted Glynn

Seventeen years ago a team of Auckland researchers investigated the best way to help families help their own children who were falling behind in reading. The answer that parents and researchers developed was a set of procedures called **Pause Prompt Praise.** The results for children's reading at home were excellent. Parents quickly learned how to help and their children made big gains. A small handbook was published, first in ***set***, then for more general use, and hundreds of parents have helped their children with these procedures. However, the gains at home were not immediately obvious at school where older low-progress readers missed out on the individual help that **Pause Prompt Praise** was able to give. Some New Zealand schools later took up the challenge to help, and teachers introduced parents to the procedures, so that families and schools could work together. Research into the help **Pause Prompt Praise** was giving to families and schools has continued to the present. This item describes where that research has led.

What is Pause Prompt Praise?

The **Pause Prompt Praise** tutoring procedures were developed in Mangere (South Auckland) in 1977. A team of researchers worked intensively with parents of a group of 10- to 12-year-old low-progress readers to produce a training booklet and video: *Remedial Reading at Home: Helping You to Help Your Child*. The booklet and accompanying research monograph were first published by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. Subsequent research led to the book *Pause, Prompt and Praise* in 1987, published in the UK. Widespread and continuing interest in these procedures has resulted in an updated version in 1992. A Maori language version, **Tatari, Tautoko, Tauawhi,** has also been developed.

The **Pause Prompt Praise** procedures were derived from theory on reading developed by Marie Clay and Stuart McNaughton. They see proficient reading as learning to use all the sources of information within and around a text to understand the particular message being conveyed. Differences between high-progress and low-progress readers were thought to lie not only in their success at identifying letters and letter-sound combinations, but also in the flexibility and fluency with which they use this information together with contextual information.

High rates of self-correction go with high progress during early reading. However, the reading support available to low-progress readers may be unhelpful two ways: (1) low-progress readers may be given fewer opportunities to read meaningful text of appropriate difficulty; (2) the type of instruction they receive may prevent them from learning to integrate contextual and letter-sound information and to self-correct. This may lead to dependence on over-intrusive remedial help. **Pause Prompt Praise** is designed for one-to-one oral reading. In this situation low-progress readers receive more opportunities to self-correct errors and to practise problem-solving strategies. Parent or peer tutors assist the struggling readers to learn these strategies when they

1. **pause** before responding to children's errors
2. **prompt** children to use both contextual and letter-sound information (rather than telling them the correct word)
3. **praise** children's use of independent strategies such as self-correction and correction following tutor prompts.

Most children learn these independent strategies from their regular engagement with texts, as part of their classroom reading activities. Indeed, applying **Pause Prompt Praise** to readers who are not experiencing difficulties, or who are making better than average progress is superfluous.

Pause Prompt Praise aims to break into the cycle of dependence. Dependence occurs when low-progress readers, encountering an unknown word, 'cue' the teacher or tutor to tell them the correct word immediately. What the **Pause Prompt Praise** tutor does is to help the reader use all the information available to solve unknown words. Such information includes (a) background knowledge of the story topic, (b) familiarity with the language structure of the text, (c) the meaning contained within the context of each sentence or paragraph, and (d) the letter-sound information within words. Tutors are trained to prompt the reader to work on the meaning of words first, before focussing on letter and sound information. Tutors tell the reader the correct word only as a last resort. Tutors do not have to respond to every error; they may ignore minor errors which do not greatly alter the *meaning* of the text.

Successful use of **Pause Prompt Praise** depends on **readers having** access to a variety of text material of **appropriate difficulty**. On the one hand, texts should not be too difficult or challenging. If there are too many errors the text loses its meaning for the reader. On the other hand, the text should not be too easy. If there are too few errors, there will be too few opportunities for tutors to learn to use **Pause Prompt Praise** and for readers to practise the skills needed to correct their errors. Successful use of **Pause Prompt Praise,** therefore, requires regular monitoring of the reader's accuracy level. Levels of text difficulty need to be adjusted (upwards or downwards) to maintain an optimal difficulty level for reader and tutor to work together. The best difficulty level for using **Pause Prompt Praise** is approximately between three and five mistakes per 50 words.

How do you use Pause, Prompt Praise?

Figure 1 outlines how to use **Pause Prompt and Praise.** *Correct Reading* is linked directly to *Praise.* When a reader correctly reads a phrase, a sentence, a whole page of a beginning text, or perhaps a paragraph from a more advanced text, the tutor should praise this specifically. Experienced tutors will praise frequently enough to let the reader know things are going well, but not so frequently as to interrupt the flow of reading. *Incorrect Reading* refers to errors of omission as well as to incorrect words or extra words added, whether they 'make sense' or not. Errors which are corrected by the reader, **without any help from the tutor** are classed as self-corrections.

When an error occurs, the tutor's first task is to **Pause.** The pause prevents the tutor from interrupting too soon. This may allow readers to notice for themselves that what they have read may not quite make sense, and, possibly, to correct themselves. The pause also allows the tutor time to decide what kind of error has occurred — whether it is a non-attempt or a substitution which does not make sense or one which does make sense. Tutors should pause for up to five seconds (during which the reader may self correct) or let the reader reach the end of the phrase or sentence containing the error, and then ask a question about the error.

After the tutor has paused, and if the reader has not self-corrected, the tutor offers a prompt to help the reader with the word. Here tutors learn to select one of three kinds of prompt, according to the type of error the reader has made.

(1) For a no-attempt error (not self-corrected after a pause), the tutor prompts the reader either to 'Read on' if the silence is at the beginning or middle of a sentence or clause; or 'Read again' if the silence is near the end. Sometimes this kind of prompt is enough for the reader to pick up the meaning of the word from the context of the sentence or story. If this happens, the reader has made a prompted correction, and the tutor should praise this.

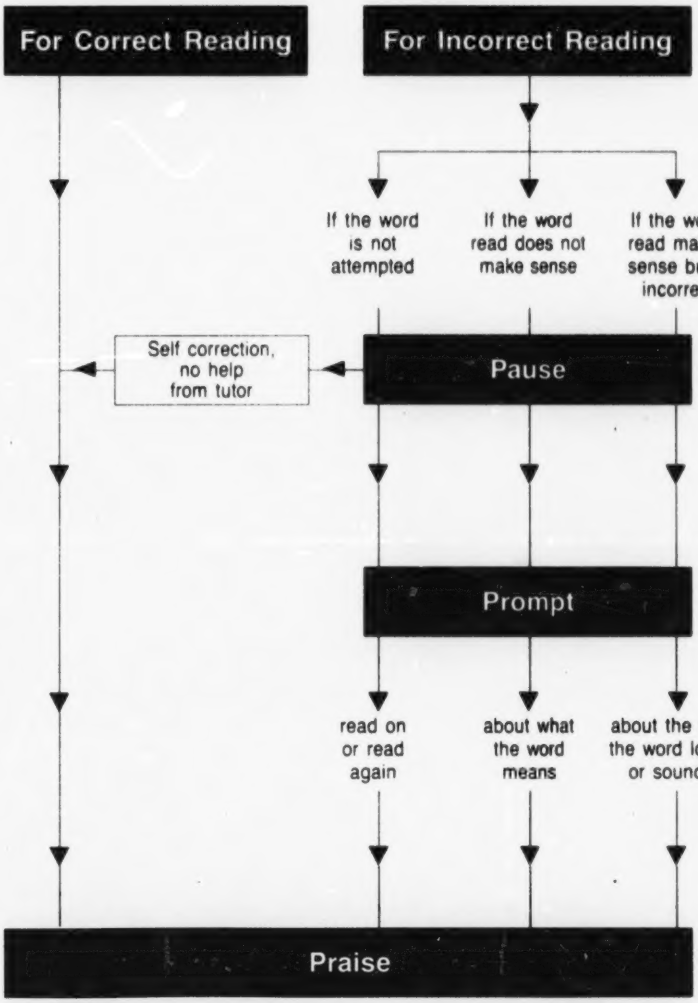
(2) When the error is a word which does make sense the tutor uses a **meaning** prompt directing the reader's attention to what the word means. Examples include questions referring to a picture, the context of the sentence, the page, the whole story, or to the reader's prior knowledge and experience.

(3) When the error is a word which does make sense the tutor may then use a letter-sound prompt, directing the reader's attention to what the word looks or sounds like. Note that this kind of prompt is offered **only** when the error suggests that the reader has already understood something of the meaning of the word.

When readers read the correct word after a tutor prompt, 'these prompted corrections should be praised. Tutors should give no more than two prompts. After the second prompt, the tutor should tell the reader the correct word. This is the 'bottom line' which tutors try not to reach.

Figure 1

Pause, Prompt, Praise


For Correct Reading
For Incorrect Reading
If the word is not attempted
If the word read does not make sense
If the word read makes sense but is incorrect
Self correction, no help from tutor
Pause
Prompt
read on or read again
about what the word means
about the way the word looks or sounds
Praise

How Effective is Pause, Prompt Praise?

Effectiveness with low-progress readers. The majority of studies with **Pause Prompt Praise** have involved readers with considerable underachievement in reading. In twelve studies reviewed in 1985 the minimum underachievement was two years. Readers in one study were all members of a special class for children with mild intellectual disability and in another, readers were all members of a semi-residential programme for children with behavioural and learning difficulties. Reading age gains across the twelve studies ranged from a low of 1.5 months for each month of tutoring, to a high of 11 months per month of tutoring. Particularly strong gains were reported when **Pause Prompt Praise** was introduced at home *and* school, with parents and teachers working in partnership.

Two later studies in the U K investigated the effects of **Pause Prompt Praise** with children who were only slightly underachieving, and with children who had advanced reading achievement. There was only a small advantage for the first group and no particular advantage for the second group. **Pause Prompt Praise** works best for readers who are having considerable difficulty with reading.

Successful tutors. To be successful tutors need to increase their rate of pausing, their rate of prompting (including using successful prompts), and their rate of praise. In 1985 Stuart McNaughton and I could report that 62 parents were tutoring their own children, 31 teachers, parents or residential staff were tutoring children other than their own, and 15 older students were tutoring younger students; all had become successful tutors and had achieved major reading gains for their learners.

A number of subsequent studies have confirmed that everyone can easily learn successful pausing, prompting and praising.

Reading benefits for tutors. One important discovery has been that there are reading gains for tutors as well as readers. It may in fact be more appropriate to select as tutors, readers who are themselves experiencing reading difficulties, albeit at higher text levels. In 1987 three primary teachers taught **Pause Prompt Praise** to three 11-year-olds who themselves had reading deficits of between one and three years. They became the tutors for three 11-year-olds who were underachieving by between four and six years. After eight weeks of tutoring, there were substantial gains for both tutors and readers.

One of the researchers followed this up with another study this time with ten 9- to 11-year-old readers. Underachievement ranged from 7 months behind to 4 years 9 months behind. The three best readers tutored three others. The four remaining readers did an individualised tape-assisted reading programme. All the children on the **Pause Prompt Praise** programme, both tutors and learners, gained, on average, 2 years 5 months. The children on the tape-assisted programme gained 1 year 4 months. Tutor children gained an average of 3.5 years, and learner children gained 1.6 years. Six months after the programme was over the three children who had acted as **Pause Prompt Praise** tutors still showed the greatest reading gain, by then 4 years.

Older children also gain: in 1993 Houghton and Glynn introduced **Pause Prompt Praise** tutoring to five pairs of 13-year-old readers. Both tutors and tutees were well below-average readers. Both groups made major gains in reading accuracy and comprehension.

Tutor Training. Given the growing evidence that **Pause Prompt Praise** is effective, attention has begun to focus on strategies for training tutors. One line has been to look at how effective feedback is when it is provided to tutors by those who are training them. In 1986 four trainers were studied as they provided feedback to parents who were tutoring their own children with **Pause Prompt Praise.** The study examined the type of feedback these trainers provided the parents, and then intervened to improve that feedback. There were clear changes.

In practically every instance, the trainers (they were College of Education students) had assumed a high level of control over the parent tutors, allowing little opportunity for parents to recall or to self-correct their own tutoring behaviour. Following the intervention (which aimed to loosen up this control) the trainers allowed parents much more opportunity to recall and explain their own use of the procedures. They provided parents with prompts or cues about tutoring procedures that were far less intrusive than before. It is a nice irony that concern about some readers being overdependent on over-intrusive tutors may be paralleled by concern about over-intrusive trainers!

From Pause Prompt Praise to Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi

Pause Prompt Praise has recently been translated into the Maori language, and presented at a hui (formal gathering) for Maori staff of the New Zealand Special Education Service. Together with Ngai Te Rangi and Ngati Ranginui people of Tauranga, the first author and Maori staff introduced the procedures (known in Maori as *Tatari, Tautoko, Tauawhi*) to assist children who are learning to read in Maori. *Tatari, Tautoko and Tauawhi* was trialled by peer tutoring which is common among Maori and referred to as tuakana-teina. The tuakana (tutors) were quite successful in using the procedures in Maori. Following training they responded to four times more teina (learner) errors, doubled their rate of pausing, doubled their use of read on and read again prompts, and doubled their use of praise for prompted corrections. Although this initial study was brief, data indicated a lower error rate and a slightly higher correct rate for teina (learners) in contrast with non-tutored children. The tuakana (tutor) children also showed decreased error rates in their own reading.

So seventeen years since the original study began, and after 15 years since the first training booklet and video were produced, **Pause Prompt Praise** continues to be used successfully by adults and peer tutors. Struggling readers, tutors, schools, and families, are all continuing to benefit.

Notes

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The original booklet to help parents with Pause Prompt Praise
Glynn, T., McNaughton, S., Robinson, V. and Quinn, M. (1979) *Remedial reading at home: Helping you to help your child.* Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research,
is no longer in print. However, a revised booklet is available and a video showing the technique in action. Write to: The Learning Shop, Box 12-188, Wellington, for
Glynn, T., Dick, M. and Flower, D. (1992) *Pause, Prompt and Praise Reading Tutoring Procedures: Tutor's booklet.* Wellington: Special Education Service.

and
Dick, M., Glynn, T. and Flower, D. (1992) *Pause, Prompt and Praise Reading Tutoring Procedures: Tutor training video.* Wellington: Special Education Service.

Subsequent research led to the publication of

McNaughton, S., Glynn, T. and Robinson, V. (1987) *Pause, prompt and praise: Effective remedial reading tutoring.* Birmingham: Positive Products;

and includes

Glynn, T., and McNaughton, S. (1985) The Mangere Home and School Remedial Reading Procedures: Continuing research on their effectiveness. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology,* 1985, pp. 66-67;

and

Wheldall, K. and Glynn, T. (1989) *Effective Classroom learning.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell;

and

Wheldall, K. and Mettem, P. (1985) Behavioural peer tutoring. Training 16-year-old tutors to employ the 'pause, prompt and praise' method with 12-year-old remedial readers, *Educational Psychology,* Vol. 5, pp. 27-44.

The Maori language version has been developed and trialled by Maori staff of the New Zealand Special Education Service, teachers, students and whanau at Maungatapu School, and Hairini Marae, Tauranga. See

Atvars, K. and Glynn, T. (1992) *Tatari, Tautoko, Tauawhi: Hei Awhina Tamariki ki te Panui Pukapuka.* Videotape. Produced by Audiovisual Section, Higher Education Development Centre, University of Otago.

and

Harawira, W., Glynn, T. and Durning, C. (1993) *Tatari, Tautoko, Tauawhi: Hei Awhina Tamariki ki te Panui Pukapuka.* Tauranga: Bay of Plenty East, Special Education Service.

and

Glynn, T., Atvars, K., Furlong, M., Davies, M., Rogers, S. and Teddy, N. (1992) Tatari, Tautoko, Tauawhi: Hei Awhina Tamariki ki te Panui Pukapuka. *Cultural Justice and Ethics Symposium Report,* New Zealand Psychological Society, Wellington.

The theory of reading developed by Professor Marie Clay and Dr Stuart McNaughton can be found in

Clay, M.M. (1979) *Reading: The patterning of complex behaviour* (2nd edition) Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books.

and

Clay, M. (1991) *Becoming literate: The construction of inner control.* Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books.

and

McNaughton, S. (1987) *Being skilled: The socializations of learning to read.* London: Methuen.

That high rates of self-correction go with high progress during early reading, is shown in

Clay, M.M. (1969) Reading errors and self-correction behaviour, *British Journal of Educational Psychology,* Vol. 39, pp. 47-56.

and

Clay (1991) above.

For further discussion of dependence on over-intrusive remedial help see

McNaughton, S. (1981) Low-progress readers and teacher instructional behaviour during oral reading. The risk of maintaining instructional dependence. *The Exceptional Child,* Vol. 28, pp. 167-176.

That applying Pause Prompt Praise to those who are experiencing no difficulties in reading is superfluous is discussed in

Wheldall, K. and Glynn, T. (1989) *Effective Classroom learning.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Figure 1 is a modification of that originally used in *Remedial Reading at Home.*

The review in 1985 of studies on Pause Prompt Praise is

Glynn, T. and McNaughton, S. (1985) The Mangere and School Remedial Reading Procedures: Continuing research on their effectiveness, *New Zealand Journal of Psychology,* 1985, pp. 66-67.

The special class children study is

Love, J. and VanBiervliet, A. (1984) Training parents to be home reading tutors: Generalization of children's reading skills from home to school, *The Exceptional Child,* Vol. 31, pp. 114-127.

The study of semi-residential children is

O'Connor, G., Glynn, T. and Tuck, B. (1987) Contexts for remedial reading: Practice reading and pause, prompt and praise tutoring, *Educational Psychology,* Vol. 7, pp. 207-223.

Strong gains when Pause Prompt Praise is used both at home and school are reported in three studies: see

McNaughton, S., Glynn, T., Robinson, V. and Quinn, M. (1981) *Parents as remedial reading tutors: Issues for home and school. Studies in Education No. 2.* Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

and

Scott, J. and Ballard, K. (1983) Training parents and teachers in remedial reading procedures for children with learning difficulties, *Educational Psychology,* Vol. 3, pp. 15-31.

and O'Connor, Glynn and Tuck (1987) mentioned above.

The two later studies in the UK are reported in Wheldall and Glynn (1989) mentioned above.

Subsequent studies to those reported in Glynn and McNaughton (1985) (see above) which confirm that everyone can easily learn pausing prompting and praising are in

Henderson, W. and Glynn, T. (1986) A feedback procedure for teacher trainees working with parent tutors of reading, *Educational Psychology,* Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 159-177.

and Wheldall and Glynn (1989) see above

and

Medcalf, J. and Glynn, T. (1987) Assisting teachers to implement peer-tutored remedial reading using pause, prompt and praise procedures, *Queensland Journal of Guidance and Counselling,* Vol. 1, pp. 11-23.

and

Houghton, S. and Glynn, T. (1993) Peer tutoring of below-average secondary school readers with Pause Prompt Praise: Successive introduction of tutoring components, *Behaviour Change,* Vol. 10, pp. 75-85.

The study in which three primary teachers taught Pause Prompt and Praise to 11-year-olds is in Medcalf and Glynn (1987), mentioned above. The further follow up study of 9 to 11-year-olds is

Medcalf, J. (1989) Comparison of peer tutored remedial reading using the **Pause Prompt Praise** procedures with an individual tape-assisted reading programme, *Educational Psychology,* Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 253-262.

That older children also gain is detailed in Houghton and Glynn (1993), referenced above.

The study looking at how trainers of tutors behave — with the intervention and following discoveries — is in Henderson and Glynn (1986) referenced above.

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Reading to Pre-schoolers

Models of Tutoring

Stuart McNaughton

Jennifer Lautusi

Reading to children at home is alive and well. This research found families in all socio-economic and cultural groups were reading to their children. But they do so in different styles, expect different outcomes, and reflect their own cultures.

A Samoan adolescent and an English girl reflect on different forms of expertise with books:

> Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do; once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, 'and what is the use of a book,' thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversations?'
>
> *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll

> I am good at prayers because, since I was a tiny boy, my father he get me and my brothers and my sisters and my cousins for to learn how to make the prayers. He also get us for to read from the Holy Book until now I am sixteen years old and am an expert in the reading of the book.
>
> *Exam Failure Praying*. Albert Wendt, 1986, p.54

The family activity of reading books reveals a great deal about what matters to people. And so it also tells us about the education they seek. This *set* item is concerned with understanding how expertise in reading storybooks develops. It uses a contemporary psychological model of tutoring (scaffolding) and checks if this helps us understand what is really going on in different socio-cultural groups.

To give you the first conclusion first: some families in Aotearoa/New Zealand read storybooks with their preschoolers in ways that are at odds with the way the theories say are the most effective. They do not, of course, do this perversely, nor out of ignorance. They have different purposes for text than those who invented the theories. You can see that Alice expects to see pictures and hear talk in a narrative, but the 16-year-old Samoan boy in Albert Wendt's story takes pride in being an expert in 'the reading of the book.'

Storybook reading : tutors and scaffolds

Studies of how reading storybooks helps children's development have yielded two results. The first is that a standard tutorial pattern has been identified. The second is that not all socio-cultural groups use the tutorial pattern exactly the same way.

The standard description of interactions between readers and preschoolers goes back at least to work by Wood, Bruner and Ross in 1976. They described the tutor as providing **scaffolding**. That metaphor has been extensively applied and elaborated in further studies, particularly of the development of language and literacy.

In general, scaffolds are described as providing tutorial support which is adjustable and temporary. In the reading of storybooks with children at home the selection and use of storybooks themselves is a form of support. In addition, dynamic support has been seen in the conversations which are interspersed during the reading of the text. The reader structures the interactions using, and responding to, questions and comments. The function of this structuring is to yield conversational exchanges which are shared ways of constructing meanings from written narratives. The tutor models, directs and prompts.

The tutor adjusts his or her role according to the way the child develops meanings. Within repeated readings of books, and of different books, support for the child shifts. The tutor moves the responsibility for learning-how-to-interact-with-text from himself/herself, to the child. The expert (reader/tutor) is aware that the novice (child/learner), through personal constructive processes labelled 'internalization' or 'appropriation', is able to handle parts of reading on his or her own, and removes the scaffolding which is no longer necessary.

Scaffolds enable expert and novice, parent and child, to share commonly held ideas about what they are aiming to do; they know about each other's focus or intentions. This common goal can be seen developing in the negotiations during conversations and in the success of conversational exchanges.

Tutorials which 'scaffold' expertise in family language and literacy are said to be, 'engaging the learner in activities which are mature social and cultural uses of narrative texts.' This means that children are engaged in something that in itself is not isolated, fragmented and cut loose from everyday uses. The reading of storybooks is, in this way, like adult uses of written language. To concentrate on letter-sound associations, however, would not resemble the ordinary, adult, every-day use of books. An important feature is that scaffolds are socialization processes.

Tutorials which have these features are supposed to be effective for acquiring expertise in general, and particularly effective for the development of early literacy skills.

Storybook reading : differing socio-cultural settings

The details of the tutorial / scaffolding model come from intensive case studies and group studies, mostly of white middle-class families. This has led researchers to conclude that:

> Children almost never encounter an oral rendering of the text of the book in a storybook-reading situation. Instead, the words of the author are surrounded by the language of the adult reader and the child(ren) and the social interaction among them. During this interaction the participants co-operatively seek to negotiate meaning through verbal and nonverbal means.
>
> *Sulzby and Teale, 1991, p. 733.*

Studies of low SES families in which storybook reading has been a regular family activity describe the interaction of adults and children as more restricted with a more limited focus on meanings and less co-operative dialogue. However, researchers who have deliberately introduced narrative texts into the literacy practices of black low SES families have noted the similarity between subsequent interactions and those in mainstream families.

Warning: there is a major assumption underlying these descriptions of tutoring and scaffolding and the research among low SES and black families: it is that *there is a right way to read storybooks to children.* This unacknowledged belief is that scaffolded storybook reading, with a focus on narrative meanings and presented in a collaborative style, is the appropriate and most effective way to socialize children into expertise with written language. What follows this assumption is the conclusion that those families who do not read with their children in this manner are socializing their children *inadequately.* This is supported by evidence which suggests that frequent storybook reading which uses the standard pattern is related to higher achievement levels in learning to read at school.

Three studies of storybook reading

At the end of this item we will return to discuss whether the underlying assumption is safe or dangerous. Before this, three studies of storybook reading in different families in Aotearoa / New Zealand are discussed. In these studies we have found the presence of substantially different patterns of tutoring and scaffolding. The extent and nature of those differences has caused us to question the usefulness of the standard model. A modified model of tutorial processes is proposed.

Study One (Phillips and McNaughton)

Ten families responded to advertisements in suburban libraries and bookshops for families interested in books and book reading. These families were Pakeha (Pakeha means people of European, particularly British descent). The incomes and occupations placed them in the top two SES groups in Aotearoa / New Zealand. In each family there were two adults and 1 or 2 children, and the mother was the major caregiver. The 6 boys and 4 girls were between 3 and 4½ years old.

The families read frequently – on average 3 books a day (87 in 28 days). Most of the books (95 percent) told a story. Both readers (predominantly the mothers) and the children initiated these sessions but it was usually the child who chose the book to be read.

After the first 28 days we introduced the family to books we chose. They were unfamiliar but similar to the ones they usually read. This enabled us to watch what was going on, particularly the tutorial processes, with standard texts.

Reading a book usually meant the parent reading the text, but not straight through; the reading was punctuated by verbal exchanges ('insertions'). Infrequently parents made verbal and non-verbal invitations to read and the child attempted to read. This occurred so infrequently that it was not included in the resulting analysis. We worked out what the goals of the reader and the child were by analysis of the *insertions;* there were several types.

Narrative insertions focused on information relevant to, or consistent with, the events and the goals of the narrative. In Example 1, the reader's comment in reference to an illustration 'Goodness! He's a big frog', and the child's question later, 'I wonder what those frogs are looking at him for?' are the beginning of a narrative insertion.

Example 1

Insertion with Narrative Focus

Text

In the dream time there lived a giant frog called Tiddalik. One morning when he awoke, he said to himself, 'I am so thirsty, I could drink a lake!' and that is what he did.

Initial Reading

Reader: Goodness! He's a big frog.
Child: And look at those little frogs.
Reader: Yes (laughing). They're all looking at him. Probably going, 'H-u-u-u. What an enormous one!

Multiple Reading

Child: I wonder what those frogs are looking at him for?
Reader: Why do you think?
Child: I don't know.
Reader: What! Do you think they're a bit surprised at how large he is and what he's doing?
Child: I think... well, he's eating all their water.
Reader: Yes, I do too.

Print insertions focused on concepts about print including references to letters, words and pages as well as attributes of books and print. The reader saying, in Example 2, 'First you can show mummy where the front of the book is?', begins a print insertion.

Other Book Insertions included questions and comments that were book related but not focused on the narrative or on concepts about print. There was an example during the same session as in Example 1 – a question about an illustration unrelated to the narrative: 'Mum. I run over to those trees?'

When the readers and children were following *performance* routines the tutoring they gave did not have the characteristics of the standard scaffolding model. The focus was different: it was on accurate rendering of the text, and it was not obviously collaborative.

The *storybook* reading showed that these families, particularly the Maori and Samoan families, could read with textual dexterity. They could do it in ways recommended by schools as educationally sound. But they selected a wider range of books than the high SES families in the previous study and, most importantly, they could shift the way they interacted within and across texts.

Study Three (Wolfgramm)

This study is of a more homogeneous group of families. Eight Tongan families, permanent residents in New Zealand, who all attended one church, were contacted through personal networks. They identified their families as Tongan ('Mo'ui Fakatonga'). Their occupations placed them at level 4 and 5 on the New Zealand SES index. Adults other than parents, as well as nieces and nephews, lived in five households. There were 2 to 5 children in the families, one of whom in each family, a 3- or 4-year-old, was the focus of our attention.

Four families read daily with the pre-schooler. The other four families read three times a week. In four of the families one person consistently read, in the other families young aunts and older siblings also assumed the role. The book reading settings were all multiparty but with an adult caregiver present.

Example 4

Routines with a Performance Focus

Early Reading

Reader: Why hares have long ears.
Child: Why hares have long ears.
Reader: Once upon a time.
Child: Once upon a time.

Familiar Reading

Child: She is up on the tree.
She is up on the... (pause)
Reader: Stool.
Child: Stool.
She is up on the horse.

Multiple Reading

Child: One day mouse, rabbit and elephant went to the fair. Mouse went up, rabbit went up, elephant went up.

All 8 families read storybooks and in 5 families other books too. Five families supplied audiotapes in which at least two storybook readings occurred over a week. In one family there were no insertions or performance routines: the reader read without interruptions.

In four families, 3 'stages' of tutoring were observed; these employed only performance routines and are shown in Example 4. In the initial stage the reader demonstrated a part of the text and the child imitated. In the second stage children read much of the text by themselves and hesitations or misreadings were repaired by the reader. In the third stage the whole text was performed alone. There were examples from three families of preschoolers reading texts entirely by themselves.

What we learnt about performance tutorials and scaffolding

Some families in Aotearoa/New Zealand use a tutorial pattern which does not fit the standard scaffolding model. Some families practise this relatively exclusively. Others are pedagogically dexterous, shifting between two major forms, each of which appears to have distinct goals. If the 'mainstream' Pakeha children in Study 1 could be described as apprenticed to *comprehension*, then children in Studies 2 and 3 reading storybooks as a performance were apprenticed also to *verisimilitude*.

This non-standard tutorial is not simple: it shares most of the core features of other effective tutorials. For example, we saw very effective tutorial structures being created, structures which were both adjustable and temporary, as they should be. The support afforded by a complete demonstration of the text could be systematically reduced, (and re-applied if necessary) depending on the child's growing control over the text. As a consequence, responsibility for accurate performance shifted to the child. There was a shared focus with no confusion over what was expected, even by siblings and other family members. Some families (in the second study) could shift, seemingly with ease, between the two forms of tutorial.

However, it is more difficult to see 'self-regulation' developing during performance tutorials. In *mainstream* book reading, you hope to see checking, reflection and inquiry developing; these are not parts of the performance activity. As you become an expert performer you have to monitor yourself to prevent inaccuracy, but as a novice *performer* you have to limit creativeness.

Performance tutorials, pedagogy and culture

When the Study 3 children were learning to read out loud, accurately, through the teaching style and scaffolding we have called performance tutorials, they were busy with a mature task which both expressed cultural values and constructed cultural values. Cultural messages are, of course, multifaceted, and only limited observations can be made here. Similarly, there are important differences within families and between groups of families, and they can not be treated in depth here.

Authority

Under some conditions the performance tutorial form may be a preferred way of teaching for Maori. In times gone by rote learning and memorisation were key instructional devices, especially for the essential shared knowledge of the tribe contained in genealogies, songs and narratives.

> Maori puukenga (knowledgeable experts) set unfashionable store by memorisation and rote learning. Nowadays... these learning sessions follow a similar procedure, with variations, repeating each name or phrase a couple of times, adding the next, repeating again from the beginning, adding the next, repeating again, and so on to the end. Some 'teachers' using this method give little or no explanation of the content until the words have been mastered; others discuss meaning at intervals during the memorising, arguing that it is easier to remember what is understood. ... it is clear that rote learning is not

Example 2

Insertion with Print Focus

Reader: First you can show Mummy where the front of the book is? Show me where the front of the book is.
Child: Yeah.
Reader: The front, where's the front?
Child: Here.
Reader: Okay. You turn the page. Where's the back of the book?
Child: Here.
Reader: Where do you start reading? Which side? Which side do you start reading?
Child: This side.
Reader: Which one?
Child: This side.
Reader: That's right. Oh! (page turned). This is where the story begins. 'No more cakes.' That's the... that's the name of the story.

Other Insertions were those insertions unrelated to book reading; typically to do with child management and interruptions to reading.

Results and analysis

Counting the insertions showed clearly that the focus for both the readers and the children was overwhelmingly on the narrative structure of the texts they read. Of the 647 insertions analysed, 86 percent of them were focused on the narrative.

The pattern of interaction between parent and child fits exactly the standard scaffolding model: reader and child collaborated in exchanges to construct meanings for the text. The preschooler participated as a full conversational partner in setting the topic.

Core features of the scaffolding model are found in Example 1. The child was engaged in a form of a mature task (reading for meanings) which was valued and functional in the family setting. Among other resources these families had on average over 450 adults' and children's books in the home, and the parents estimated that they spent over 2 hours in reading and writing activities per day.

The tutorial support was adjustable and temporary. In Example 1, the mother first focused the child's attention on the central narrative problem in the story: the giant frog has drunk all the water and the other animals have to find a way to get it back. By the last reading the child took responsibility for inserting dialogue at this point, also focusing on the problem. In the ensuing conversation the mother's part in the dialogue supports, through prompts, the child's articulation of the problem: 'I think... well... he's eating all their water.'

Quantitative analyses showed that in the first readings the adults concentrated on clarifying the narrative, and over time reduced their emphasis, as the children more often initiated this clarifying talk. The reader then shifted the focus towards making links with what was coming next. The children's self initiated questioning and checking showed the development of self regulation.

Study Two (McNaughton and Ka'ai)

A second study, involved families from different socio-cultural groups. Would the same tutorial/scaffolding model apply?

We began not by looking for families but by finding preschoolers who looked like becoming good readers at school. Older sisters and brothers helped find these children. Twelve families are described here. We audiotaped samples of books being read when the children were aged between three and four years. The families identified themselves as Maori (3), Pakeha (6) and Samoan (3). Maori, Samoan and Pakeha researchers worked with them. Incomes and occupations placed them in socioeconomic levels 4 and 5 (the New Zealand SES index has 6 levels). The families had two parents (and sometimes more adults from an extended family) and three or more children. The Samoan families were fully bilingual.

Reading and writing for a range of purposes were highly valued adult activities. Reading books was a daily occurrence. But in the majority of the Maori and Samoan households reading was typically done in groups of 3 or more, with other members of the family such as an older sibling or an auntie still at school often taking the role of reader. Eleven of the 12 families read story books. But in 7 families other books, including church texts, were selected more often for reading.

The standard tutorial pattern was present. The majority of insertions (60 percent of total insertions), and subsequent exchanges, had readers and children collaborating in constructing meanings from the text. But on some occasions a different form of interaction took place. These are a type of language routine which we called **performance routines**.

Performance routines occurred when part of the text was repeated by the child. On these occasions (16 percent of the insertions and routines) the reader indicated, through intonation patterns and pauses, that a model had been provided and the child's task was to imitate. These performance routines were even more noticeable on texts that were not storybooks. Examples of both types of interactions are shown in Example 3. They come from a book reading session in a Maori family. A storybook was read collaboratively (all 13 insertions had a narrative focus). However, a cousin's school book (a beginning reader) was read using performance routines on every line of text.

Example 3

Shifting tutorial styles in one book reading session by one family (child age 4;11)

(Book One – home storybook)

Text

Patch had been given the job of painting white lines for the running lanes.
Reader: What are they doing there D...?
Child: Painting... a line.
Reader: So that they can run down the track straight.

(Book Two – cousin's school book)

Text

Andrew had an engine called Red Streak.
Reader: Andrew.
Child: Andrew.
Reader: had.
Child: had.
Reader: an engine.
Child: an engine.
Reader: called.
Child: called.

> an end in itself but the first step towards the goal of meaningful performance. ... knowing which to use and when, and that depends on knowing the background, being able to size up the situation, and to make the right choice.
>
> *Metge, 1984*

In an oral culture the accuracy of oral texts and a stress on the preservation of knowledge are central concerns. It is also linked to a principle that knowledge is precious and to be treasured. This sense of guardianship and protection reinforces the value of representing knowledge accurately and without embellishment.

For Samoan families written texts reflect a set of values associated with the authority of church teachings and a strong respect for the church and for schooling. Early literacy experiences and resources are promoted and channelled by the pastor school (in Samoa) and by Sunday school sponsored activities in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The reading of texts also represents the authority of elders, and supports adherence to significant religious beliefs.

In daily reading from the Bible and family devotions (lotu) which are common in Samoan families can be seen the purposes of religious beliefs. But there are also others, including the cohesion of the family, and its commitment to shared beliefs, roles and responsibilities in the faa'samoa (the Samoan way). At a family's lotu there may be grandparents, parents, children and grandchildren. The performance tutorial is used when younger members are taught biblical passages. During lotu the leader (who reads first) has a position of prestige. Asking younger family members to take over the role of leading the devotion marks a stage in their lives but is also fulfilling the older members' responsibility for nurturing the younger ones (including aiding their reading development) and as a way of telling them that they are cared for.

The authority of texts and the presence of performance tutorials is associated with religious values in Tongan families too. For example, the performance tutorial is a standard form used in Sunday Schools to learn hymns and church texts. The Tongan children in Study 3 were observed learning hymns, bible verses and articles of faith at their Sunday School. Performance tutorials were used in these activities. A segment of one such tutorial, part way through the learning of a new hymn, is shown in Example 5.

Example 5

A segment from a Performance tutorial for learning a hymn in a Tongan Sunday school (from Wolfgramm, 1991)

Teacher: ... Taha ... Hiva! [... One ... Sing!] (Pointing at the board)
Class: (The class sings the first line of the hymn)
Teacher: Toe ai... Ua... Hiva! [Again ... Two ... Sing!]
Class: (The class sings again the first line of the hymn)
Teacher: Sai ... [Good ...] (The teacher then sings second line of the hymn)
Teacher: A'i pe ia ... [Sing just that line ...]
Class: (The class sings the second line of the hymn)

The role of the individual

Important views of both *family roles* and *the nature of literacy* are seen in the way book reading sessions are carried out. All book reading in the Tongan families involved more than one other person. Older brothers and sisters, aunties and female cousins were part. By contrast, even though seven of the ten pakeha middle-class families in Study 1 had two or more children, only a third of the sessions in 28 days involved more than one reader and the preschooler. In all of the Maori and Samoan families in Study 2 there were examples of multiparty sessions while in only two of the pakeha families was this the case, despite there being older siblings.

Group learning is a preferred pedagogical mode for Maori. However, this does not exclude personal learning interactions; these can be seen occurring in group settings and shared activities. But the development of individual expertise carries responsibilities: for Maori, knowledge is a group possession, does not belong to the individual and is to be used in the service of the group. Part of whanaungatanga [familiness] is the relationship *tuakana-teina* — an older sibling or more expert member of the group takes responsibility for the needs of a younger or less expert member.

Similarly, in Samoan society older siblings and extended family are often expected to take immediate responsibility for looking after the needs of a younger child, at times instead of a parent. This carries meanings about the status of childrearers, reflecting values associated with the priority of familiness, including loyalty to the extended family unit.

In Tongan families similar principles are at work in who reads to the preschooler. In traditional society as soon as a child is weaned and becomes less reliant on his or her mother, older children in the family take charge. The value of this responsibility within the group is derived from the principle of 'Fatongia' (the Tongan way). Older extended family members have a role to care for the younger.

Is there a best way of reading with preschoolers?

As the examples have shown there is not one 'best' way. It depends what you are trying to do. Contrast these two: (1) the mainstream parent preparing the child for mainstream schooling and, along the way, instilling attitudes to life — an emphasis on independence and a personal focus; (2) the Tongan family preparing the child to take part in worship and, along the way, instilling attitudes to life — it is a family affair.

However, the tutorials and scaffolding for both cultures can be carried out with flair, or rather badly or somewhere in between. Different configurations will have their own internal criteria for effectiveness. Tutorials can be well or poorly implemented to achieve the purposes of the family's literacy practices and more general socialization goals. For example, the degree of overt collaboration and the coherence of the questions and comments in collaborative participation might determine the development of comprehension strategies for narrative texts. In directed performance tutorials the clarity and chunking of the model may determine the speed of acquisition of accurate performance.

Why has the view that the best sort of pre-school reading is reading-for-meaning-in-stories been so strongly supported? Literacy development often has been assumed to follow a fixed unitary sequence dictated by universal stages or constructed through a core set of concepts. In either case, development is seen as moving inexorably towards a final state defined by *school* forms of literacy. Research evidence supports the argument that schema for narrative structures and comprehension strategies develop from collaborative participation. Limited storybook reading, as well as infrequent experience of collaborative participation in storybook reading, has been associated with problems in the development of literacy at school. For these sorts of reasons book reading experiences which are not like mainstream ways come to be seen (explicitly or implicitly) as non-functional or inadequate.

However, no child nowadays is taught in just one way — the family, the school, the television, and the sports club may all teach in different ways and all affect the child's development. Some forms of literacy certainly carry more 'cultural capital' in an educational system than others. For example, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, schools build upon expertise in reading texts for narrative meanings, rather than expertise in recitation. But as the Study 2 examples show, people can be at home in different cultures and literacies.

The challenge, given that it is important also to become expert in the comprehension and enquiry oriented literacy of the school, is to create bridges and foster dexterity. We need to recognise the strengths and capabilities of all children as they make the transition to school, and to build on these.

Notes

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The ideas and studies in this *set* item have been presented in several papers in journals and in particular in a paper presented at the Biennial Conference of the Society for Research in Child Development, New Orleans, March 1993. They are also to appear in more detail in the forthcoming book
Kohl de Oliviera, M. and Valsiner, J. (Eds.)(1994) *Literacy in Human Development*, Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

The author would like to acknowledge, with thanks, the families with whom the researchers worked, and the New Zealand Ministry of Education which funded some of the research.

The two quotations at the beginning are from
Carroll, L. (1986) *The complete illustrated works of Lewis Carroll.* London: Chancellor Press, page 17.

Wendt, A. (1986) Exam Failure Praying. In *The birth and death of the miracle man : a collection of short stories.* New York: Viking, p. 54.

That not all socio-social groups use the tutorial pattern in exactly the same way is noted in
Sulzby, E. and Teale, W. (1991) Emergent literacy. In R. Barr (Ed.) *Handbook of reading research, Vol. 2.* New York: Longman.

The standard description of interactions between readers and preschoolers goes back at least to
Wood, D., Bruner, J. and Ross, G. (1976) The role of tutoring in problem solving, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry,* Vol. 17, pp. 89-100.

Elaboration of the scaffolding metaphor can be found in
Cazden, C. (1988) *Classroom discourse.* Portsmouth: NH: Heinemann.

and
Rogoff, B. (1990) *Apprenticeship in thinking : cognitive development in social context.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

and
Wood, D. (1989) *How children think and learn.* London: Basil Blackwell.

For the ideas of internalisation and appropriation see Rogoff, above.

That tutorials, as first described, are supposed to be effective in acquiring expertise, particularly in literacy, is maintained in Cazen, Rogoff, Sulzby & Teale, Wood, above, and also
Tharp, R. & Gallimore, R. (1988) *Rousing minds to life: teaching, learning and schooling in social context,* NY: Cambridge U. Press.

A study of low SES families with more restricted interaction is, for example,
Heath, S.B. (1982) What no bedtime story means : Narrative skills at home and at school, *Language in Society,* Vol. 11, pp. 49-76.

Note, however, that in one study co-operative exchanges were infrequent. See
Pellegrini, A.D., Perlmutter, J.C., Galda, L. and Brody, G.H. (1990) Joint book reading between black Head Start children and their mothers, *Child Development,* Vol. 61, pp. 443-453.

The evidence that frequent storybook reading following the standard pattern is related to higher achievement levels can be found in Sulzby and Teale, referenced above.

Study 1 can be found described in detail in
Phillips, G. and McNaughton, S. (1990) The practice of storybook reading to preschool children in mainstream New Zealand families, *Reading Research Quarterly,* Vol. 25, No. 3, pp. 196-212.

Study 2 can be found described in more detail in
McNaughton, S. and Ka'ai, T. (1990) Two studies of transitions : socializations of literacy and Te hiringa take take : Mai i Te Kohanga Reo ki te kura. Report to the New Zealand Ministry of Education.

Study 3 can be found described in more detail in
Wolfgramm, E. (1991) Becoming literate : The activity of book reading to Tongan preschoolers in Auckland. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis, University of Auckland.

That performance tutorials may be preferred by Maori as a way of teaching is explained in, and the quotation is from,
Metge, J. (1984) *Learning and teaching : he tikanga Maori.* Wellington: New Zealand Department of Education.

That in Samoan culture the reading of text represents the authority of the elders and supports religious beliefs is discussed in
Duranti, A. and Ochs, E. (1986) Literacy instruction in a Samoan village. In B.B. Schieffelin and P. Gilmore (Eds.) *The acquisition of literacy : ethnographic perspectives.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

A description of a family lotu can be found in
McNaughton, S. (In press) *Patterns of emergent literacy: processes of development and transition.* Oxford University Press.

The *tuakana-teina* relationship is explained more fully in
Hohepa, M., Smith, G.H., Smith, L.T. and McNaughton, S. (1992) Te Kohanga Reo hei tikanga ako i te Reo Maori : Te Kohanga Reo as a context for language learning, *Educational Psychology,* Vol. 12, Nos. 3 and 4, pp. 323-346.

Tutorial styles are discussed in detail by Sulzby & Teale, referenced above, and an interesting study of teaching in Quranic schools in Morocco is found in
Wagner, D.A. and Spratt, J.E. (1987) Cognitive consequences of contrasting pedagogies: The effects of Quranic pre-schooling in Morocco, *Child Development,* Vol. 58, pp. 1207-1219.

The idea that literacy develops in a unitary sequence with universal stages, or through a core set of concepts can be found in
Goodman, Y. (1990) *How children construct literacy.* Newark: International Reading Association.

and
Mason, J.M. and Allen, J. (1986) A review of emergent literacy with implications for research and practice in reading. In E.Z. Rothkopf (Ed.) *Review of research in education, Vol. 13,* Washington: American Educational Research Association.

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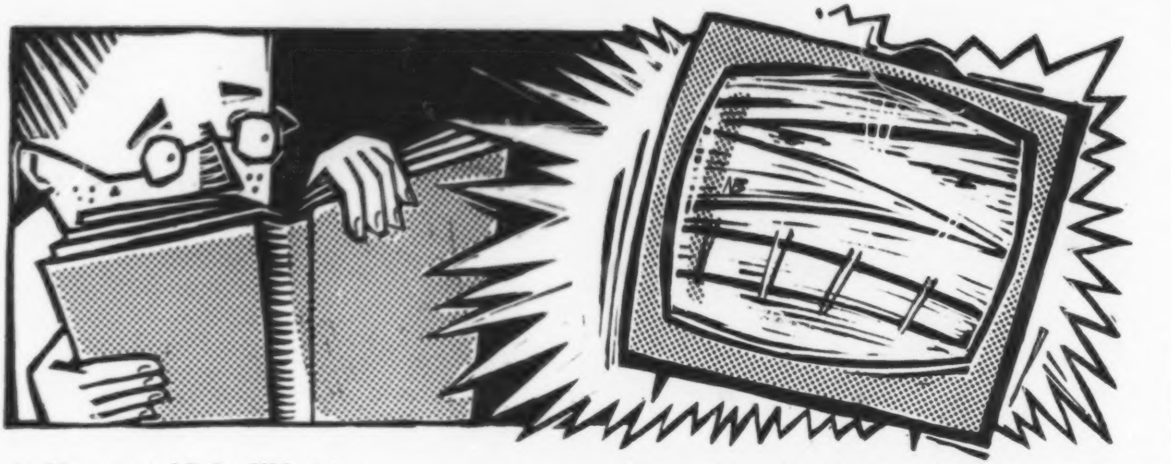
TV *and* HOMEWORK

Mallory Wober

Independent Television Commission (UK)



Nicola Belsham

An Unsuspected Role of Television

TELEVISION might be some use in education if there is no other light : you can read a book with your back to a switched-on screen. So said Neil Postman in 1986. The great mass of research on television has supposed that people near the TV were actually watching the screen, even if only sporadically. So analyses of programme content, of viewers' perceptions, of learning, of behavioural effects and of appreciation have all had their place. A few studies have conceived of television as a piece of the furniture or as a member of the family, and others have documented television's role in supplanting other activities. Very few if any studies have dealt with the possibility that, at least for some of the time, television may supply a kind of welcome, though empty, presence that may actually facilitate other activity. It may even be thought to be useful to help some people get on with their homework.

The Idea of the Screen as a Protector

In Victorian times a screen was a piece of furniture which provided privacy. Ornamented screens were good to look at but did not command a great deal of attention, for the main purpose of a screen was to act as a limited barrier. In the age of television the meaning of the word 'screen' has changed, and it is generally thought of as the principal object of attention. Some educators and parents have thought of television as a threat, either because it commands their attention completely, or because it interferes with the pupil's application to his or her homework. Yet it is a common observation that children want to, and do choose to do their school homework with a musical accompaniment, either from radio or some other source. Similarly, some children do their homework with the television switched on.

The weight of tradition and evidence in cognitive psychology gives the impression that switched-on television is detrimental to concentration on bookwork. This effect may well be true; but the active screen may nevertheless be a common enough experience. Further, people who have this experience may explain it in certain ways which they consider are convincing, but which may or may not be valid. For example, someone may answer that they like to have the television on while they do bookwork and explain that it helps them to concentrate and work more effectively; tests may show that such a person does work more effectively with a television background (and if so, the claim is valid) or that with it he or she works less effectively (in which case the claim is not valid). This study does not tackle the problem of validity, but gives some idea of how many people do bookwork with background television, and looks at some of the explanations which people give.

Methods

The Broadcasters' Audience Research Board runs a Television Opinion Panel in which some 3000 people return diaries, weekly, with evidence of which programmes they have seen and to what extent this viewing has been appreciated. These panellists are also sent other questions which vary week by week. On one such week they were asked to reply to a set of questions under the heading 'Working with Television'. The first four questions specified different kinds of homework with writ-

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Reprinted from the *Journal of Educational Television*, Vol. 16, No.2, 1950.

ing, and people were asked simply to answer yes or no. Two of the categories of work (school homework, and writing 'on which you have to concentrate') were then taken separately and, for each, people were asked to identify (from a set of contingencies) how they 'like to have the TV'. To end the short questionnaire, four accounts of doing homework with television as a distractor, and four describing how television might facilitate homework, were given and you were asked how much you agreed, or disagreed, with them.

Results

People were first asked separately whether they did various kinds of work at home (see Table 1).

Table 1

Reports of home activity

	Percentages who report the activity				
	Age (years)			Socio-economic status	
Activity	All (12+)	12-15	16-24	A,B, (high)	D,E (low)
School homework	12	74	21	18	9
Writing letters, or other items needing concentration	58	58	62	66	52
Reading for work, needing concentration	24	38	33	41	15
Reading for pleasure, but requiring concentration	57	55	56	66	49
Base numbers	3020	208	356	476	835

Those who do school homework most frequently are children aged 12 to 15, but one-fifth of 16- to 24-year-olds also do school homework. Of course, adults do not do school homework, and the results show this, but over half the population, of whatever age or social class, say they do some kind of writing at home which requires concentration, or reading for pleasure. One quarter, overall, say they must read for work. In all these activities, people of high socio-economic status are more likely than the population at large to say they are involved, while those of lower status are less likely to be involved.

How frequently do people have the television turned on whilst doing intellectual work? (see Table 2).

More people, especially those aged 12 to 15, say they work with the television switched on than with it off. This applies for school homework but also for writing. Amongst those who work with the television on, half (for school homework) or two-thirds (for writing) appear indifferent to the presence of the active screen; further, more people say they like to have the accompaniment than say it is an impediment.

It is no surprise that most school homework is done by the youngest age group, but this group is not otherwise conspicuously different from the population at large: fifty-eight percent do non-school written work with a television accompaniment. It is not just the young who grew up with TV who can concentrate while it is on. Socio-economic status is a pointer: more high SES people prefer not to do their work with television switched on. But all those who do work with a television accompaniment are much the same in the extent to which they like, dislike or are indifferent to television's presence.

Table 2

Television as an accompaniment to intellectual work

	Percentages who report the activity				
	Age (years)			Socio-economic status	
Activity	All (12+)	12-15	16-24	A,B, (high)	D,E (low)
Like to have TV on while I do:					
school homework	3	24	3	4	2
writing, requiring concentration	9	13	13	6	10
TV is usually on, but, makes no difference with doing:					
school homework	4	20	8	6	3
writing, requiring concentration	25	21	27	25	24
TV is usually on, and makes it difficult to do:					
school homework	1	6	2	1	1
writing, requiring concentration	5	5	7	5	4
Totals					
TV on, with:					
school homework	8	50	13	11	6
writing, requiring concentration	39	39	47	36	38
Done, but not when TV is switched on:					
school homework	5	23	9	10	4
writing, requiring concentration	32	21	27	43	26
Questions not answered about:					
school homework	45	20	32	34	54
writing, requiring concentration	20	20	15	12	27
Base numbers	3020	208	356	476	835

Reasons for Finding Television Accompaniment Useful (or Not)

Four kinds of explanations of what goes on if a person has to work with a television accompaniment were put. The respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with each. In each kind of explanation, one positive and one negative function was outlined (see Table 3).

For three of the four pairs of items, the negative consequence was more often affirmed than was the positive. Nevertheless, substantial numbers did agreed with these statements of positive functioning, and in the case of TV's social role these numbers were in a small majority.

Two items explore the possibility that television may distract (or attract) some other person whose presence is likely to be disturbing. There is a bare majority for the positive one of these two items, with a clear rejection of the other. Television is felt to work usefully as a social distractor - more because people think that TV is not a 'social magnet' than because they think it is a 'social centrifuge.'

Between particular subgroups the results are very different. Although not shown, there are negligible differences in answers between men and women, and small differences between socio-economic subgroups. There are major differences, however, with age: in general, the youngest subgroup accepts the positive roles of what, to older people, are drawbacks. The one item on which all agree, on balance, is that 'the activity on the television distracts my attention quite a bit'; even so, there remain 29% who reject this, and among the youngest age group there is only a weak marginal agreement that TV distracts.

New Findings

More recently a similar survey was made through a panel of children. The results are not yet fully written up but the data is of interest. The children were asked:

> *Thinking about your school homework, which of the following apply to you (circle one number).*

The results are in Table 4 on the next page.

Over half the 13- to 15-year-olds do their homework with the TV on, though about 12% of them find it a distraction. More girls work with the TV on than boys. It is the 10- to 12-year-olds who find the TV most distracting. These results confirm and add to the other survey.

Table 3

Reasons for finding television a help or hindrance to work

	Percentage of respondents				Scale score* by age (years)	
Response	Agreeing	Not sure	Disagreeing	Net Agreement	12-15	55+
Social role						
Having a TV on helps me to keep someone else in the room interested, and stops them interrupting me	38	25	37	+1	56	40
The TV on brings someone else into the room and I get interrupted	21	26	53	-32	39	40
Net total				+33	+17	0
Auditory Role						
The sound of music cuts me off from things and helps me concentrate	31	27	42	-11	56	35
The sound of music interrupts my concentration	37	19	44	-7	38	56
Net total				-4	+18	-21
Emotional role						
Having a TV on reassures me and I get on with my work	18	27	55	-37	44	27
The activity on TV makes me feel on edge and uneasy about getting on with my work	30	23	47	-17	39	52
Net total				-20	+5	-25
Distractor role						
Having music on keeps other people from distracting me	25	33	42	-27	51	35
The activity on the TV distracts my attention quite a bit	50	21	29	+21	58	65
Net total				-48	-7	-30

* Scales scores are calculated by giving 100 points for those agreeing strongly, 75 for those agreeing, 50 for those not sure, 25 for those disagreeing and 0 for those disagreeing strongly, and then obtaining the average. These figures contrast the young and the elderly

Table 4

Children's Panel opinions on TV and homework

	All	Boys	Girls	Age			Socio-economic status	
All results as percentages				7–9	10–12	13–15	A,B,C_1,	C_2,D,E
1. I do homework and I like to have TV on while I do it	14	12	16	8	15	19	11	16
2. I do homework where the TV is usually switched on, which makes no difference to me	21	20	23	10	25	27	19	22
3. I do homework and the TV is usually switched on, which makes working difficult	7	7	7	6	10	6	7	8
Total % working with TV on	**42**	**39**	**46**	**24**	**50**	**52**	**37**	**46**
4. I do homework, but where the TV is not switched on	33	35	30	33	28	36	42	27
5. I don't do homework at home	10	10	9	21	8	1	11	9
No answer	15	15	15	21	14	11	11	17
Number of children	**842**	**407**	**435**	**291**	**277**	**274**	**378**	**464**

Conclusions

Homework is a particular valuable part of the process of education. Three-quarters of the 12- to 15- year-olds say that they do homework. Modern parents will observe that homework is often done, even in the seclusion of one's own room, with music switched on. In some cases homework is done with television. This may be by default, and reluctantly, as when accommodation is limited, or it may be by consent or even by preference when seclusion is possible. An orthodox view from the world of cognitive psychology would be to consider television (or just radio music) as a dysfunctional distraction; however, again at an anecdotal level, some young students refute this and even claim advantages for what is informationally a 'noisy' environment for intellectual work.

This study does not intend to solve these problems. It does show how widespread the experience of noisy work environments really is. Half our young teenagers do their homework to a television accompaniment, as do two out of five in the public at large.

As to the reasons for welcoming added noise or for finding it difficult, this study has made a small start by proposing a few possible suggestions and finding how far they are supported. None of the suggestions was dismissed outright. Only one is broadly agreed with, at a whole sample level, but three are broadly affirmed by the young teenagers.

These results invite extension. If people say that the sound of music acts as a kind of 'sensory curtain' and actually helps them to concentrate, does this apply more to people who are essentially unmusical, so that the music functions as the noise of a waterfall might to others? Are the claims of such people substantiated in the production of more or better homework than they would produce without music? These, and many other questions arising from these results, await investigation. It is clear, however, that it would be wrong simply to say that television (or musical accompaniment) to intellectual homework is a drawback.

Notes

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The idea that TV is good only as a source of light for reading comes from

Postman, N. (1986) *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, London: Heinemann.

A study of TV as a piece of furniture is

Dunn, G. (1977) *The Box in the Corner*, London: Macmillan.

A study of TV as a member of the family is

Morley, D. (1986) *Family Television: cultural power and domestic leisure*, London: Comedia.

A study of TV supplanting other activities is

Williams, T.M. (Ed.) (1986) The Impact of Television. A Natural Experiment in Three Communities, New York: Academic Press.

The weight of tradition and evidence on cognitive psychology that switched on TV is detrimental to homework can be felt in

Singer, J.L. and Singer, D.G. (1986) Family experiences and television viewing as predictors of children's imagination, restlessness and aggression, *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 42, pp. 107-124.

and Williams above, and in

Van der Voort, T.N.A. and Van Lil, J.E. (1989) Does television reduce children's leisure time reading? Paper presented at the *Annual Conference of the Mass Communication Association*, San Francisco, CA.

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